

# WAR COMMENTARY

## For Anarchism

Vol. 6, No. 21.

11th AUGUST, 1945.

# ABOLISH WAR

## The Only Answer to the Atomic

THE recent complacent announcement by the Allied leaders of the atomic bomb, the world's most destructive weapon of war, explodes once and for all the myth of the moral superiority of the American and British ruling classes over the Nazis or the "dirty Japs". Undoubtedly, had the Germans used this monstrous device before the Allies had a chance to put it into operation, they would have been regarded as having reached the depths of moral depravity. When they produced the flying bomb and the V2 rocket, the leaders of British and American opinion were full of the most self-righteous indignation, which is made to appear all the more hypocritical now that it is revealed that all the time experiments were going on in Britain and America to perfect this weapon which makes the most violent weapon of the Nazis seem a silly toy.

The atomic bomb, we are told, can cause the same amount of destruction as 20,000 tons of T.N.T. This, it should be remembered, is equivalent to rather more than the weight of

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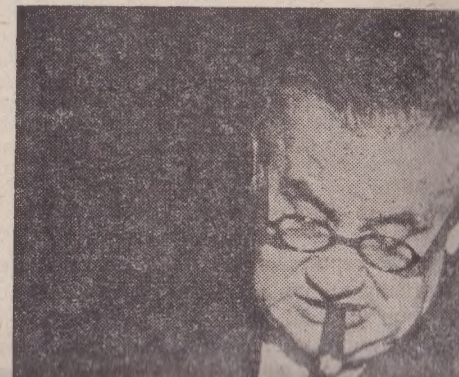
## CONSCRIPTION TO

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The atomic bomb, we are told, can cause the same amount of destruction as 20,000 tons of T.N.T. This, it should be remembered, is equivalent to rather more than the weight of explosives contained in all the flying bombs which were discharged by the Germans against Britain. It is equivalent to 2,000 of the largest blockbusters which the R.A.F. dropped on Berlin, and a single plane, we are told, could do as much destruction as 5,000 British planes bombing Berlin. After hearing this news put forward by the Allied leaders with glib complacency, as if they were announcing some quite ordinary and pleasant event, we find it impossible fully to express our horror that men who pretend to be working for the benefit of the human race should display such hypocrisy and such a complete lack of any sense of moral values.

While the Allied leaders were begrudging small quantities of money to be spent on vital social services, while they delayed housing and pretended they could not spend money on hospitals or education, they spent the colossal sum of five hundred million pounds on perfecting this machine of destruction.

Atomic energy can be used as easily for constructive as for destructive purposes. For years scientists have been endeavouring to gain the means of research in order to use this energy for beneficial purposes, such as power in industry and transport, etc. But throughout this time they have been labouring under the opposition of vested interests whose profits would be affected by such a discovery, and it is only when atomic energy seems a likely way of winning a war and causing mass destruction and death on an unprecedented scale that they are given the opportunity to put their discoveries into effect. It is a scandalous reflection on our contemporary society that so many of the important and potentially beneficial inventions should have been brought forward only because they have

also proved effective destructive agents in modern warfare. Nor can the scientists themselves be allowed to go without condemnation. Admittedly, in a sense they were the victims of the system, in that they could only develop their discoveries by agreeing to adapt them for destructive purposes. But in thus yielding, they have become the greatest enemies of mankind, and it is impossible to excuse them for the part they have willingly played in furthering the destructive desires of political and military leaders.

The atomic bomb is a weapon in the hands of the ruling class which cannot be underestimated by the workers. It has been said that, like gas and bacteriological warfare, it is so frightful a weapon that no government would use it for fear of reprisals, and from this idea it has been suggested that its advent may mean the end of major wars because they will be too frightful in prospect for governments to embark on them. This, however, is not borne out by historical examples. Although none of the warring powers used gas on enemies who were as well equipped for retaliation as themselves, they have had no compunction in doing so where the enemies were weak, as the Italians did in Abyssinia. And the present use of the atomic bomb against the Japanese shows that governments will not scruple to use it where they can do so with impunity.

So far as the relationships between governments and their peoples are concerned, we cannot escape from the fact that the power of the ruling class is made all the greater by the discovery of a weapon which does not need large masses of people for its manufacture or operation, and can therefore be entrusted to small and select groups of reactionaries who will not be subject to the same influences as conscript armies or large masses of factory workers.

While we are fully aware of the terrible possibilities implicit in this new invention, and of the way in which it may be used against the struggling workers, we cannot fail to point out that, in a free and co-operative society, the discovery of how to use atomic energy could be turned to the lasting benefit of the human race. All that the so-called Utopians like Kropotkin and Godwin envisaged in the past from the discovery of new forms of energy could now be realised in a few years by the use of this vast new source of power. Disagreeable occupations like coal mining could be eliminated, and a new era of leisure and abundance could be initiated by the responsible use of this discovery. It is the crime of a society dominated by authority and property that it should in fact seem to offer us little more than a new era of fear and destruction.

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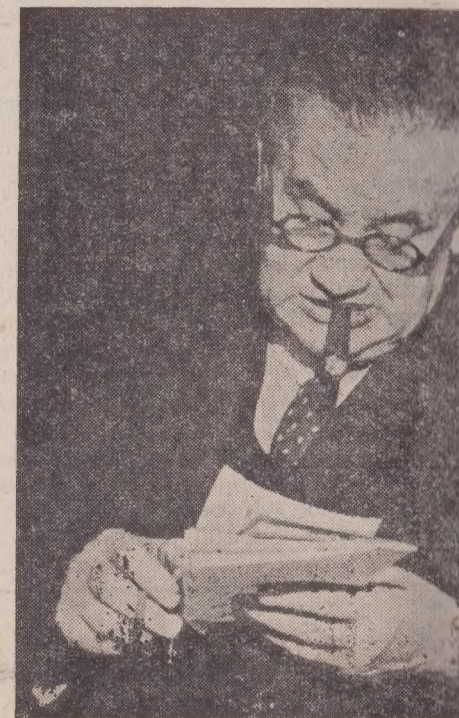
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What we did have under the rule of Bevin as Minister of Labour and Morrison as Home Secretary was a terrific intensification of conscription of life. Their records have been nothing but a series of compulsions and punishments for the workers.

It would appear that Bevin was aware as long ago as April, 1944, that this heavy hand was causing discontent and revolt among the workers. A graphic account of a reunion between him and the T.U.C. was given in the *Daily Express*, 6/4/44:

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## Railwaymen Strike



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At last the accumulated bitterness of the railwaymen is coming to the surface, and, while the union leaders indulge in protracted talks with the railway companies for better wages and conditions, the workers in North West England and London are beginning to take matters into their own hands by working according to rule and by refusing to do Sunday and overtime work until their very slight demands are met.

Before the war, railway work was, next to agriculture, the lowest paid industry. During the war, under the promise of better conditions after hostilities had ended, the railway workers toiled for long hours in the most exhausting conditions, working with diminished staffs through all the dangers and inconveniences of air raids and blackouts, and carrying much greater quantities of goods than in peacetime. At the end of this period they still find themselves the lowest paid industry outside agriculture. The minimum rate for a London railway worker is now £4 for a 48 hour week. In the country it is even lower. The average wages for railway workers are 5s. 4d. a week lower than for workers in other industries, and the railway shopmen are still fighting for a guaranteed week.

The railwaymen are becoming impatient for an improvement in these conditions. The unions put forward their proposals in March and have pushed the matter with such little vigour that negotiations have only begun seriously in the last fortnight, and there is no doubt that the matter is now receiving serious consideration only because the men have chosen to take a hand in forcing the issue by direct action.

In the North-West, Liverpool, Crewe, Chester, the North Wales coast and Lancashire, the Sunday strikes have been going on for several weeks, and for the last fortnight among the Southern Railway workers in London. In Liverpool the last strike was extended over Bank Holiday, a decision which, in spite of the dishonest appeals of union officials not to interfere with holidays, was decided by a mass meeting of Liverpool drivers with only three dissentient voices. In all these strikes nearly 25,000 railwaymen have been involved.

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not had a day off for 12 to 15 weeks, while others are still awaiting their holidays for last year.

Naturally enough, the union leaders have been very anxious to stop the men from taking action on their own account. They want to get the credit themselves for any concessions which are won, but it is certain that nothing substantial will be gained unless the men show that they intend to take resolute direct action. At Liverpool, when the union officials tried to persuade a meeting of railwaymen to abandon their Sunday strikes, they were shouted down and the men did not alter their decision.

Meanwhile, the intervention of Isaacs, the new Minister of Labour, has shown the anxiety of the new Labour government in the railway situation. The Labour leaders realise that, at the beginning of their regime at least, they will have to avoid appearing too hostile to the demands of the militant workers, and for this reason they want to avoid either a situation where they will have to apply pressure to the workers in support of the bosses, or one where the wave of strikes will force them into acknowledging and legalising the achievements of the class struggle, as happened under the Popular Front government in 1936.

There is one danger in the present situation. The government may decide, with the approval of the City, to nationalise the railways, and a large proportion of the militant workers will undoubtedly be deceived into believing that this will be a solution to their problems. In fact, where railways have been nationalised, the workers have never benefitted. The State as an employer is no better than a capitalist company—perhaps even worse, because its power is greater and more concentrated. Let the railwaymen ask the postmen what it is like to be employed by the State before they decide that nationalisation will bring them into a workers' paradise. The railwaymen, like the workers in other industries, will only have satisfactory conditions when they have taken over the railways and are able to run them without the interference of state or private capitalists, for the good of the community and for no-one's profit or privilege.

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"*I think you will find that a Labour Government will give you proper compensation.*"

His declaration is the essence of "Nationalisation". How is it to be realised? The Government floats a loan on the Stock Exchange. (These loans are known as Gilt-Edged Securities and are usually oversubscribed on the first day of issue, showing that our capitalist investors have no fear of "Nationalisation". Instead they are considered good investments for which they will receive 2½%, 3%, 3¾% or maybe more interest p.a. guaranteed by the Government. A steady unearned income.)

With these loans the government "compensate" say the Railway Shareholders and the Mineowners for the Railways and Mines. The shareholders and mineowners now re-invest this "compensation" in further loans or more profitable industries. And so the old game of exploitation goes on. Their "securities are made more secure". They become "shareholders in the community". That is; they own you and me. We are held to ransom through the state. The National Debt to the Capitalist Investors mounts up in a greater increasing tempo. The Gilt-Edged Securities, Government Departments and Bureaucracies increase adding further burdens to our backs, the

backs of workers and producers.

The sum total of "Nationalisation" means that after having robbed us for decades the robbers are to be compensated for the return of the swag they have stolen from us, and are still to get interest annually on that same compensation. In the Courts of Law the petty thief has his swag taken from him and returned to the "rightful owner" but it is not so with the Capitalist thief or their Labour touts. They are protected by "the law".

In line with Attlee's declaration is that of Gunner Cooney, the "Communist" candidate in the Central Division of Glasgow. Here is the report from the *Evening Citizen* dated 26th June, 1945:—

"Business men would have a far greater economic security under Communism than they have to-day, Gunner Cooney . . . told a business men's meeting to-day. Under Communism, he said, they would not have nightmares of Bankruptcy hanging over them and indeed, would have a higher standard than they have now. He was not however going to try to convert them to Communism. He was vitally interested in the economic welfare of Scotland because he realised that it is not a bit of good having a programme of Social improvement unless there was a flourishing industry giving good wages to working people.

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So much for the "Nationalisation" decoy of the "Labour" and "Communist" election appeals. What of the application of the real Labour policy?

Already this Government is using conscripted troops against a section of the community, the Surrey Dockers. When the boats already docked there are unloaded, the docks are to close we are informed in the press, the dockers locked-out or suspended



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Readers of 'War Commentary' are reminded of the impending change in the title of the paper  
At the next issue, dated 25th August, it will be changed to  
"FREEDOM through  
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pulsory military service for the youth of Britain, as they did over the Bevin Boys and industrial conscription for women.

The trades union and Labour bosses have accomplished a complete *volte face* in the development of trade unionism. Formed to protect the interests and liberty of the workers, they now offer the greatest threat, and are committing themselves to a policy of suppression and authoritarianism such as no Tory could have got away with.

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and starved into submission and traffic diverted to the Merseyside, until the dockers "see reason". A mere sample of how "Labour" will Govern.

The Railwaymen are threatening action, which may be realised before these lines appear in print. Soon "in the interests of the community" we will be told they will also feel the mailed fist of the Labour Government. Nationalisation would lend a further argument to justify their arbitrary suppression of desires for a better standard of life, meagre though they are.

"Give them a chance" we hear apologists for the Labour Party putting forward. How much longer have we to give them a chance? The past thirty years was surely long enough for them to demonstrate what they would do, and they have certainly shown their intentions. Their support for the 1914-18 War. The betrayal of the 1926 General Strike, and the triple alliance betrayal of 1921. The inauguration of the hated "Means Test". Their inertia during the Spanish struggle of 1936-39. The support for Imperialism during the present blood-bath. Bevin's administration of Conscription, Herbert Morrison as Home Secretary, etc., etc., to mention only a few of the chances they have had. No! credulous worker. No party, no Leaders will or can emancipate the Working Class. The Working Class must do their own emancipating. Belief in leadership or parliamentarism is only delaying the day. The sooner you stop following messiahs, the sooner will we realise the goal of the Working Class, Freedom from Tyranny, Economic and Political. The right of access to the means of life without being torn to pieces of flocks of vultures. That goal can only be reached by Anarchist methods. We await your co-operation.

FRANK LEECH.



# STARVATION IN EUROPE

"Thousands of people will starve and freeze to death in Europe this winter unless help can be rushed from outside." This is an official statement issued by the U.S. Office of War Information on the 28th July.

The report further stresses the fact that only twelve million tons of food and thirty million tons of coal can prevent the most deadly famine on the Continent. Forty-two million tons represent double the tonnage of the British Merchant Navy in 1939; the needs of Europe are enormous and one must also remember that besides food and coal Europe needs clothes, machinery, locomotives, petrol, etc.

What the U.S. War Information report does not mention is that starvation already exists in Europe to-day and that epidemics are spreading all over "liberated" Europe. Newspaper correspondents give us a lurid picture of the conditions existing in the countries occupied by the Allies:

"There are plenty of people in Berlin trying to sustain life on no more than a slice or two of dry bread a day. There are women who take to the streets and offer themselves with a kind of casual hopelessness to anybody who cares to give them a few scraps of food—in the Tiergarten recently a German woman approached a British officer and offered herself in return for one bar of chocolate."

*Manchester Guardian*, 1/8/45.

We are told that the Allies do not wish to pamper the German people, that they are made to suffer as a just retribution for their crimes. This inhuman policy does not however apply only to Germany. Countries which have fought on the side of the Allies are in no better economic position. The American magazine *Life* reports:

"In Western Europe the chief sufferers are the children. Rickets are five times as common as before the war and infant mortality has risen. Archbishop Spellman, in France in April, saw a new breed of 'wolf children, predatory and skilled in deceit in foraging for the necessities of life'."

In Holland the people are unable to recover from the sufferings endured during

jurist, a Dr. Fontein, of this city, was worth volumes of testimony. He spoke quietly of an astonishing Robinson Crusoe existence he and his wife led in the suburbs of The Hague. He lost 40 pounds and understands that he will be lucky to live out another winter."

Unfortunately reports from many countries are lacking, particularly from those occupied by the Russians. One hears only occasionally that people are starving in Budapest or begging for food in Czechoslovakia and from Allied soldiers in Norway that the Norwegians are hungry.

With hunger come epidemics. Diseases are spreading, typhus, dysentery, tuberculosis, rickets . . .

Already in May 16th the *Manchester Guardian* military correspondent pointed out that "control of typhus is and will be for some time a major problem for the Allied health authorities in occupied Germany". Since then the situation has worsened; Berlin has been particularly affected because of the terrible food shortage in the city:

"All statistics in present day Germany are inadequate and current figures relating to infectious disease in Berlin must be qualified by the fact that a great many cases are not notified. Bacillary dysentery at present is the most serious epidemic, but there has been a disquieting increase in typhoid in the last few days.

The infection that may spread from cases of unnotified typhoid is a very real danger. Typhus is not at present a problem in Berlin, but the medical authorities are anxious about what may happen in the autumn and winter. Typhus is a lice-borne disease, and in summer shows a seasonal decline. Crowded living conditions, shortage of soap, and lack of washing facilities will increase the danger of typhus when the weather becomes colder and people tend to wear more clothes and to huddle together in whatever shelter they can find."

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meal in a Paris restaurant while prisoners just back from Buchenwald are reported to be losing instead of gaining weight on the French diet. There have been demonstrations against this scandalous situation but there has been no widespread movement to put a stop to these injustices. The Resistance Movements who fought so effectively against the Nazis and the Gestapo are watching passively the old and new profiteers gorge themselves while they starve.

Some kind of remedy will have to be found, however, by the Allied Governments, not because the sufferings of the people of Europe hurt the conscience of our statesmen but because starvation may bring revolts. That professional philanthropist of the new Starvation Army, the Director

General of U.N.R.R.A., Mr. Herbert Lehman, at a press conference in Rome on the 10th July made this extremely clear. He declared: "Frankly the outlook is unpromising; if the liberated countries of Europe fall a prey to famine and pestilence there cannot be security for any of us." Security means of course the rule of reactionary governments completely submitted to the Allies when that security is menaced food is used as a political weapon to reimpose Allied rule. Not so long ago U.N.R.R.A. stopped the supplies to Greece when E.A.M. fought for the independence of the Greek people. It is to be expected that what happened in Greece will repeat itself in most European countries during the winter. Will food be the trump card of reaction?

## REPLANNING LONDON

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Explained by E. J. CARTER and ERNO GOLD-  
FINGER. Penguin, 3s. 6d.

London, the "great wen" as Cobbett called it, is a problem which is bound to raise enormous difficulties for any society that makes the attempt to change England into the country of a healthy and vigorous civilisation. The anarchists realise the problem of London all the more acutely because they see the great city not merely as the country's greatest conglomeration of slums, bomb damage, traffic tangles and smoke nuisances, but also as an artificially distended metropolis whose size is much too large for it to maintain any homogenous life within itself, and whose tendency to centralise all the sources of national activity has steadily drained away the vitality of regional cultures and rural ways of living. London has stamped its megalopolitan pattern over the whole of England, and until this form of spiritual exploitation is ended it will remain impossible for people outside London to develop creative cultures or for people inside London to gain that real contact with rural life which is necessary for a balanced and healthy mental outlook.

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Bad housing and bad planning, bad roads and too few open spaces, the kind of points which the plan sets out to solve, are indeed harmful and need our fullest attention. But the London planners fail when they stop short of a recognition of the fundamentally evil nature of both the factory system and the metropolitan form of society. While large factories remain, they will impose uniformity on the lives of the worker and impede their freedom of movement. While the metropolitan idea remains, the country will continue to be eaten up by the city, and London will remain the cancer that drains the life from the rest of England.

It would have been more courageous and perhaps more realistic to have looked to a radically shrunken London whose great suburbs would have returned to agriculture and the majority of whose former inhabitants would have been



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In Holland the people are unable to recover from the sufferings endured during German occupation, and face the coming winter with despair. The *Evening Standard* correspondent cables from The Hague:

"Any temptation one might have to minimise the suffering of the Hollanders is quickly dispelled by a talk with the people. For instance, a ten minutes chat with an elderly

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These reports give the lie to the rather surprising statement made by the Deputy Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service who after visiting Europe a few months ago "reported very little starvation and a higher general health standard than before the war."

We see that the scarcer the food the more flourishing the black market seems to become. If one can afford a thousand francs one can still have a beautiful

found, however, by the Allied Governments, not because the sufferings of the people of Europe hurt the conscience of our statesmen but because starvation may bring revolts. That professional philanthropist of the new Starvation Army, the Director

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It is the fundamental error of the County of London Plan that its authors accept London as it is and, instead of proposing a gradual dispersion of the substance of the metropolis until London is once again a unit of manageable size, they merely wish to juggle with the elements within London itself and to replan it in terms of more open spaces and zoned housing and

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It would have been more courageous and perhaps more realistic to have looked to a radically shrunken London whose great suburbs would have returned to agriculture and the majority of whose former inhabitants would have dispersed themselves into the rural districts to work in decentralised industries which provided variety both in life and work. But, as the planners were obviously too much attached to the *status quo*, we have to console ourselves with admiring the superb standard of production which this *Penguin* digest has attained in wartime.

L. T. C.

## RUM, GUNS AND GOD

Before the war, the scattered islands of the South Seas were clothed in a sugary aura of romance. Since the coming of the Pacific war many of them have become the scenes of violent fighting between the American and Japanese armies. What we rarely hear, at any time, is how the natives of these islands really live. Before the war they were represented as glamorous Dorothy Lamours or athletic young giants lounging under coconut palms or swimming in the gleaming surf off coral beaches, the fortunate inhabitants of an earthly paradise. Since fighting began over their islands we have heard little of them, except for occasional pictures of a few rejected and sick-looking Kanakas acting as porters for white soldiers. No doubt they have shared the misery which is inflicted on all non-combatants who happen to be placed by unavoidable circumstances in the middle of a battlefield where the fighting seems to be of a particularly intensive character.

clothes that rot quickly in this rotting climate; hygienically, clothes could not be kept clean within the native standard of living, so that skin disease, tuberculosis and parasites benefited. Psychologically a new element of shame and secrecy was introduced into the open, balanced physical approach of the sexes."

### "Sweep These Creatures Away"

Among the traders the worst were the sandalwood traders, who paid the islanders minute quantities of trinkets or old iron for cutting and transporting great quantities of this wood, which they sold in China for large profits. These traders had no respect at all for life. They would shoot down the natives at the least provocation, and in some cases massacred whole villages. They even went to the extent of introducing measles and other epidemic diseases which resulted in thousands of deaths.

1850 was about 100,000. Just before the war it had fallen to 2,000. The population of the New Hebrides in 1860 was well over 600,000. To day it is 40,000. In the once populous Society Islands, including Tahiti, only 14,000 people are now left, including Europeans and Asiatic immigrants. The island of Aneityum in the New Hebrides is an extreme example. When the whites first arrived its population was 12,000. By 1880, it had fallen to 1,000. To-day it is between 200 and 300. In some islands the decline still continues and the sex ratio has been so upset that there seems no alternative to extinction. In others there has been a slow increase in recent years.

The survivors, living in the ruins of once great villages and centres of tribal cultures which have passed away, are weakened with the heritage of disease and poverty left by a century of the most shameful exploitation in the history



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But this, in fact, is only the last in an almost unending series of miseries which have afflicted the natives of the South Sea Islands since the advent of white influences a little more than a century ago. To white people with plenty of money the islands may be a paradise. To the surviving natives they have been for many years the kind of hell which the exploited find in any part of the world, except that perhaps nowhere else have primitive peoples been so much the victims of cynical white oppression and exploitation.

### Early Prosperity

In the early seventeenth century when the Spaniards first sailed among the Marquesas Islands and the New Hebrides, they brought back reports of islands teeming with people who lived in prosperity and leisure, and when Captain Cook and Bougainville travelled through the South Seas in the next century they found the same ample condition prevailing. As late as the 1840's, Herman Melville, deserting a whaling ship, lived among the natives of Nukeheva in the Marquesas Islands and has left behind, in his incomparable *Typee*, the account of a primitive society rich in culture and material wealth, whose people were healthy and lived in a leisurely way on the plentiful products of their fertile valleys. The early explorers of all these islands are agreed on their populousness and the natural grace and vigour of their inhabitants.

But it was not long before the islanders began to suffer from contact with the white men. Their healthy conditions and freedom from European diseases made them all the more susceptible to these once they were introduced. Measles, mumps and influenza assumed the character of fatal diseases, and syphilis and consumption became chronic scourges. As early as the 1760's, according to the tradition, the seamen of the explorer Bougainville introduced syphilis among the famous beauties of Tahiti, a great number of whose people have suffered from it ever since.

### The Salesmen Of Jehovah

The first white men to make an organised attack on the islands, apart from a few isolated traders, were the missionaries, who began to arrive as early as 1796. Their contribution to the destruction of the balance of native life was considerable. By violently breaking the taboos and destroying the tribal customs, they broke up the moral criteria of the islanders and injured the co-operative unity of tribal life, so that where people had lived in harmony and mutual aid before, they descended to bickering and dishonest relationships which had been unknown in their indigenous society. By destroying with a savage fanaticism the old native culture—many of the missionaries describe with gusto how they burnt the beautiful native carvings on great public bonfires—they left the islanders open to all the worst influences of the debased white civilisation represented by the crude and violent traders who began to swarm into the area after 1850. The natives gave up the ceremonial drinking of kava and took to trade rum, abandoned their own clothes and utensils for crude calico and Birmingham trinkets, and gave up their comparatively innocuous and ritualistic tribal battles for wholesale murder with trade muskets.

In its consequences one of the worse of the actions of the missionaries was their insistence on the wearing of clothes. On this Tom Harrison, the anthropologist, has remarked:

"Economically the mission natives were thus firmly yoked to the trader and to copra or sandalwood production, so that they might get clothes; they were supplied with the poorest

Among the traders the worst were the sandalwood traders, who paid the islanders minute quantities of trinkets or old iron for cutting and transporting great quantities of this wood, which they sold in China for large profits. These traders had no respect at all for life. They would shoot down the natives at the least provocation, and in some cases massacred whole villages. They even went to the extent of introducing measles and other epidemic diseases which resulted in thousands of deaths. John G. Paton, the most famous of the South Sea missionaries, gives an indignant account of such an incident.

"About this time I had a never-to-be-forgotten illustration of the infernal spirit that possessed some of the Traders towards these poor Natives. One morning, three or four vessels entered our Harbour and cast anchor in Port Resolution. The captains called on me; one of them, in manifest delight, exclaimed: 'We know how to bring down your proud Tannese men! We'll humble them before you!'

I answered, "Surely you don't mean to attack and destroy these poor people?"

He replied, not abashed but rejoicing, 'We have sent the measles to humble them! That kills them by the score. Four young men have been landed at different ports, ill with measles, and these will soon thin their ranks.'

Shocked above measure, I protested solemnly and denounced their conduct and spirit; but my remonstrances only called forth the shameless declaration, 'Our watchword is—Sweep these creatures away and let white men occupy the soil!'

The indirect result of this incident was that, after many of the Tannese had died from measles, the survivors decided to have no more to do with Europeans and frightened Paton away, while taking care not to do him any violence. Paton went to the authorities with his grievance and returned with a warship, which shelled the island, landed a punitive party, killed several Tannese and destroyed villages and boats. As a result the Tannese became notorious killers of white men. Such an incident is only typical of many.

### Blackbirding

The sandalwood trade died away towards 1865, and was replaced by blackbirding, which was the forcible recruiting of labourers for the Queensland sugar plantations. The means of recruiting were crude and violent. Many of the islanders were just kidnapped, and hundreds were killed in resisting. In one case sixty out of eighty men held in a ship were killed while trying to escape. Those who were not actually kidnapped were lured away by false pretences. A Royal Commission in 1885 reported that:

"Natives were seduced on board by false pretences; some were forcibly kidnapped; the nature of their engagements was never fully explained to them; they had no comprehension of the nature of the work they had to perform; they attached their marks to contracts that were deliberately misrepresented to them."

Those who survived the violence of the recruiters and the rigours of the journey found it difficult to live in the unfamiliar circumstances of the plantations. Their death rate in Queensland was 85 per thousand, against 13 per thousand for Europeans. Only a small minority returned home, diseased and rewarded for their years of toil with a few pounds worth of inferior trade goods.

### The Process Of Extinction

Blackbirding was eventually suppressed, and the natives were left to the mercies of the missionaries and the white planters who began to settle and take over the lands left by the colossal depopulation of the islands. The net result of the ravages of disease, murder and transportation was a violent and rapid fall in the population from the early days of 1840 down to the present time. The native population of the Marquesas in

300. In some islands the decline still continues and the sex ratio has been so upset that there seems no alternative to extinction. In others there has been a slow increase in recent years.

The survivors, living in the ruins of once great villages and centres of tribal cultures which have passed away, are weakened with the heritage of disease and poverty left by a century of the most shameful exploitation in the history of imperialism.

To-day, with their tribal economies completely broken, they are obliged to try and fit themselves into the framework of European commerce. They need articles made in Europe, and for fear of the missionaries they buy European cloth. In order to gain these they have to lend themselves to white exploitation either by working for private European planters or the great plantations of the Lever combine, or by selling their products, which in effect means that they are at the mercy of the traders. The copra trade, which is the most important in many islands, is controlled by one or two large European combines, who are able to dictate prices and whose reductions in payments have often caused widespread distress to the islanders.

The war, as I have said, has meant only another stage in the misery of the South Sea Islanders. In some of the groups very few will survive, and it may be that soon whole races will die out completely, like the Tasmanians. For this wholesale destruction of peoples, as evil as any extermination of Jews in Europe, nothing is to blame except the desire of English and French capitalists—both financial and spiritual—to exploit the riches of the islands without the least consideration for the people to whom they belonged.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

*There is perhaps no greater encouragement for one whose view of life is essentially anarchic than the realization that through many centuries, and in ages during which political violence, oppression and mental conformism reigned almost unchecked, there have existed always individuals—usually isolated, often hated and persecuted during their lives—who have understood and had the courage to oppose the deadening and reactionary character of Church and State, and have asserted the freedom of the individual seeing in the free, anarchic expression of each man's individuality the only path to a social existence based upon the principles of freedom, equity and mutual aid.*

*In this country, we can look back upon many who have contributed in some degree to the formation of that comprehensive view of life which to-day we call anarchism; and because an understanding of the idea of freedom in the past is an invaluable aid to the assessment of revolutionary thought to-day, we are commencing this series of quotations from writers and poets of other centuries in this country. It need hardly be said that we are not in the least actuated by nationalistic motives in conceiving this series in terms of British writers: rather, we feel that the idea of freedom, whose flame has never been extinguished in this country, gives great hope of that future conflagration which, in Britain as in other lands, will one day allow us to create a new society upon the ashes of the old.*

S. W. T.

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FIRE

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# STARVATION IN EUROPE

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## Little Known Anarchists-9

### TOM CANTWELL

Tom Cantwell first became active in the Socialist movement by joining the Socialist League in its early days. With Morris, Kitz, Mainwaring and others he entered heart and soul into the splendid open-air propaganda which was so vigorous in those days. They held the crowds at street corners, inspiring them with a hearty spirit of revolt which the many years of reaction had not entirely effaced.

Though a basket maker by trade, in the interests of the movement Cantwell learnt to set type and soon became a proficient printer. He was constantly producing leaflets and placards for propaganda purposes which he used to stick up himself in conspicuous places. When the split occurred in the Socialist League and the "Commonweal" passed to the Anarchists, he took over the printing and management, living in the printing office and receiving a wage when there was any money to pay. When he had any money to spare he brought out pamphlets at his own expense, and produced one of the few editions of Bakunin's "God and the State".

The "Weal" was a fearless exponent of revolutionary Anarchist-Communism and consequently was frequently raided by the police. The editor, David Nichol, was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment over the Walsall plot, one of the foulest police plots in the shameful political history of the country. During this period Tom worked all hours on the antique press as the sales of the paper reached phenomenal heights. He soon followed Nichol to prison in 1894. When the Tower Bridge was to be opened by Queen Victoria, some of the comrades decided to take advantage of the big crowd and hold a meeting. Tom printed a poster for the occasion which he held in front of him whilst speaking.

**TOWER BRIDGE**

**FELLOW WORKERS**

You have expended LIFE ENERGY & SKILL in building this Bridge now come the

**ROYAL VERMIN AND RASCALLY POLITICIANS**

with Pomp & Splendour to claim all the credit.

**YOU ARE CONDEMNED TO THE WORKHOUSE AND A PAUPER'S GRAVE**

to glorify these

**LAZY SWINE**



the spreading, typhus, dysentery, tuberculosis, rickets . . .

Already in May 16th the *Manchester Guardian* military correspondent pointed out that "control of typhus is and will be for some time a major problem for the allied health authorities in occupied Germany". Since then the situation has worsened; Berlin has been particularly affected because of the terrible food shortage in the city:

"All statistics in present day Germany are inadequate and current figures relating to infectious disease in Berlin must be qualified by the fact that a great many cases are not notified. Bacillary dysentery at present is the most serious epidemic, but there has been a disquieting increase in typhoid in the last few days.

The infection that may spread from cases of unnotified typhoid is a very real danger. Typhus is not at present a problem in Berlin, but the medical authorities are anxious about what may happen in the autumn and winter. Typhus is a lice-borne disease, and in summer shows a seasonal decline. Crowded living conditions, shortage of soap, and lack of washing facilities will increase the danger of typhus when the weather becomes colder and people tend to wear more clothes and to huddle together in whatever shelter they can find."

*Manchester Guardian*, 26/7/45.

These reports give the lie to the rather surprising statement made by the Deputy Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service who after visiting Europe a few months ago "reported very little starvation and a higher general health standard than before the war."

We see that the scarcer the food the more flourishing the black market seems to become. If one can afford a thousand francs one can still have a beautiful

not because the sufferings of the people of Europe hurt the conscience of our statesmen but because starvation may bring revolts. That professional philanthropist of the new Starvation Army, the Director

for the dependence of the Greek people. It is to be expected that what happened in Greece will repeat itself in most European countries during the winter. Will food be the trump card of reaction?

## REPLANNING LONDON

THE COUNTY OF LONDON PLAN,

Explained by E. J. CARTER and ERNO GOLD-FINGER.  
Penguin, 3s. 6d.

London, the "great wen" as Cobbett called it, is a problem which is bound to raise enormous difficulties for any society that makes the attempt to change England into the country of a healthy and vigorous civilisation. The anarchists realise the problem of London all the more acutely because they see the great city not merely as the country's greatest conglomeration of slums, bomb damage, traffic tangles and smoke nuisances, but also as an artificially distended metropolis whose size is much too large for it to maintain any homogenous life within itself, and whose tendency to centralise all the sources of national activity has steadily drained away the vitality of regional cultures and rural ways of living. London has stamped its megalopolitan pattern over the whole of England, and until this form of spiritual exploitation is ended it will remain impossible for people outside London to develop creative cultures or for people inside London to gain that real contact with rural life which is necessary for a balanced and healthy mental outlook.

It is the fundamental error of the County of London Plan that its authors accept London as it is and, instead of proposing a gradual dispersion of the substance of the metropolis until London is once again a unit of manageable size, they merely wish to juggle with the elements within London itself and to replan it in terms of more open spaces and zoned housing and

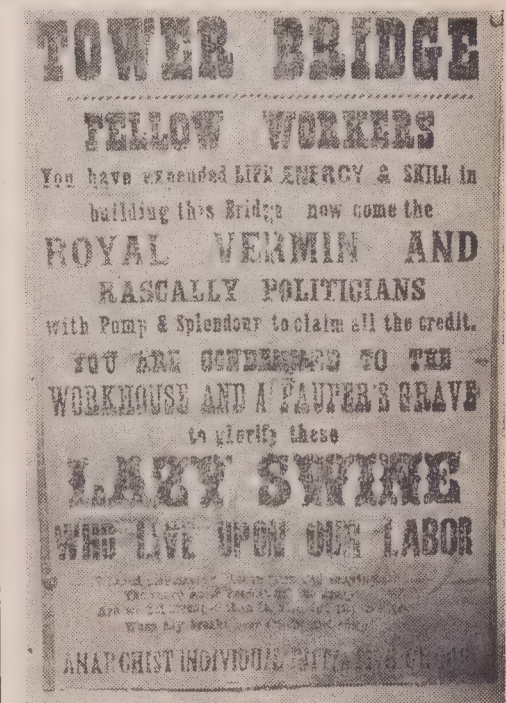
factory districts. The plan, in fact, merely attempts to mitigate the conditions of a swollen urban conglomeration. It does not look forward to a day when such an artificial monster will have been dispersed and men will return to living towns which are sufficiently large to become the centres of varied and integrated life, but also sufficiently small to maintain a really close contact with the country life.

Bad housing and bad planning, bad roads and too few open spaces, the kind of points which the plan sets out to solve, are indeed harmful and need our fullest attention. But the London planners fail when they stop short of a recognition of the fundamentally evil nature of both the factory system and the metropolitan form of society. While large factories remain, they will impose uniformity on the lives of the workers and impede their freedom of movement. While the metropolitan idea remains, the country will continue to be eaten up by the city, and London will remain the cancer that drains the life from the rest of England.

It would have been more courageous and perhaps more realistic to have looked to a radically shrunken London whose great suburbs would have returned to agriculture and the majority of whose former inhabitants would have dispersed themselves into the rural districts to work in decentralised industries which provided variety both in life and work. But, as the planners were obviously too much attached to the *status quo*, we have to console ourselves with admiring the superb standard of production which this *Penguin* digest has attained in wartime.

L. T. C.

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Another comrade, G. T. Quinn, who only held the poster for a few minutes, was arrested later when he went to the court as a witness for Cantwell. It was obvious that there had been a number of "narks" in the crowd at Tower Hill, and when cross-examined in court these people admitted being in the pay of the police. Their conflicting evidence was opposed by the consistency of four independent witnesses. Morris appeared as a witness, but others were intimidated by the police and thus prevented from giving evidence on behalf of the prisoners, while the judge showed his bias throughout the trial by assisting the prosecution at every opportunity. The two comrades were each sentenced to six months imprisonment.

Immediately the storm broke in the Press. Every vile name and slander that could be used was flung at the Anarchists by the hirelings of the capitalist press. They indulged in an orgy of mud-slinging and true to their cowardly natures, having got the Anarchists they must kick them. Whilst serving this sentence, a crisis arose in the affairs of the "Commonweal" and it

## GUNS AND GOD

with Seas coming scenes of armies. of these mounted as lounging surf off paradise. and sick- on-comba- instances in to be of a

clothes that rot quickly in this rotting climate; hygienically, clothes could not be kept clean within the native standard of living, so that skin disease, tuberculosis and parasites benefited. Psychologically a new element of shame and secrecy was introduced into the open, balanced physical approach of the sexes."

### "Sweep These Creatures Away"

Among the traders the worst were the sandalwood traders, who paid the islanders minute quantities of trinkets or old iron for cutting and transporting great quantities of this wood, which they sold in China for large profits. These traders had no respect at all for life. They would shoot down the natives at the least provocation, and in some cases massacred whole villages. They even went to the extent of introducing measles and other epidemic diseases which resulted in thousands of deaths.

1850 was about 100,000. Just before the war it had fallen to 2,000. The population of the New Hebrides in 1860 was well over 600,000. To day it is 40,000. In the once populous Society Islands, including Tahiti, only 14,000 people are now left, including Europeans and Asiatic immigrants. The island of Anetiym in the New Hebrides is an extreme example. When the whites first arrived its population was 12,000. By 1880, it had fallen to 1,000. To-day it is between 200 and 300. In some islands the decline still continues and the sex ratio has been so upset that there seems no alternative to extinction. In others there has been a slow increase in recent years.

The survivors, living in the ruins of once great villages and centres of tribal cultures which have passed away, are weakened with the heritage of disease and poverty left by a century of the most shameful exploitation in the history of



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"About this time I had a never-to-be-forgotten illustration of the infernal spirit that possessed some of the Traders towards these poor Natives. One morning, three or four vessels entered our Harbour and cast anchor in Port Resolution. The captains called on me; one of them, in manifest delight, exclaimed: 'We know how to bring down your proud Tannese men! We'll humble them before you!'

I answered, "Surely you don't mean to attack and destroy these poor people?"

He replied, not abashed but rejoicing, 'We have sent the measles to humble them! That kills them by the score. Four young men have been landed at different ports, ill with measles, and these will soon thin their ranks.'

Shocked above measure, I protested solemnly and denounced their conduct and spirit; but my remonstrances only called forth the shameless declaration, 'Our watchword is—Sweep these creatures away and let white men occupy the soil!'

The indirect result of this incident was that, after many of the Tannese had died from measles, the survivors decided to have no more to do with Europeans and frightened Paton away, while taking care not to do him any violence. Paton went to the authorities with his grievance and returned with a warship, which shelled the island, landed a punitive party, killed several Tannese and destroyed villages and boats. As a result the Tannese became notorious killers of white men. Such an incident is only typical of many.

### Blackbirding

The sandalwood trade died away towards 1865, and was replaced by blackbirding, which was the forcible recruiting of labourers for the Queensland sugar plantations. The means of recruiting were crude and violent. Many of the islanders were just kidnapped, and hundreds were killed in resisting. In one case sixty out of eighty men held in a ship were killed while trying to escape. Those who were not actually kidnapped were lured away by false pretences. A Royal Commission in 1885 reported that:

"Natives were seduced on board by false pretences; some were forcibly kidnapped; the nature of their engagements was never fully explained to them; they had no comprehension of the nature of the work they had to perform; they attached their marks to contracts that were deliberately misrepresented to them."

Those who survived the violence of the recruiters and the rigours of the journey found it difficult to live in the unfamiliar circumstances of the plantations. Their death rate in Queensland was 85 per thousand, against 13 per thousand for Europeans. Only a small minority returned home, diseased and rewarded for their years of toil with a few pounds worth of inferior trade goods.

### The Process Of Extinction

Blackbirding was eventually suppressed, and the natives were left to the mercies of the missionaries and the white planters who began to settle and take over the lands left by the colossal depopulation of the islands. The net result of the ravages of disease, murder and transportation was a violent and rapid fall in the population from the early days of 1840 down to the present time. The native population of the Marquesas in

300. In some islands the decline still continues and the sex ratio has been so upset that there seems no alternative to extinction. In others there has been a slow increase in recent years.

The survivors, living in the ruins of once great villages and centres of tribal cultures which have passed away, are weakened with the heritage of disease and poverty left by a century of the most shameful exploitation in the history of imperialism.

To-day, with their tribal economies completely broken, they are obliged to try and fit themselves into the framework of European commerce. They need articles made in Europe, and for fear of the missionaries they buy European cloth. In order to gain these they have to lend themselves to white exploitation, either by working for private European planters or the great plantations of the Lever combine, or by selling their products, which in effect means that they are at the mercy of the traders. The copra trade, which is the most important in many islands, is controlled by one or two large European combines, who are able to dictate prices and whose reductions in payments have often caused widespread distress to the islanders.

The war, as I have said, has meant only another stage in the misery of the South Sea Islanders. In some of the groups very few will survive, and it may be that soon whole races will die out completely, like the Tasmanians. For this wholesale destruction of peoples, as evil as any extermination of Jews in Europe, nothing is to blame except the desire of English and French capitalists—both financial and spiritual—to exploit the riches of the islands without the least consideration for the people to whom they belonged.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

*There is perhaps no greater encouragement for one whose view of life is essentially anarchic than the realization that through many centuries, and in ages during which political violence, oppression and mental conformism reigned almost unchecked, there have existed always individuals—usually isolated, often hated and persecuted during their lives—who have understood and had the courage to oppose the deadening and reactionary character of Church and State, and have asserted the freedom of the individual seeing in the free, anarchic expression of each man's individuality the only path to a social existence based upon the principles of freedom, equity and mutual aid.*

*In this country, we can look back upon many who have contributed in some degree to the formation of that comprehensive view of life which to-day we call anarchism; and because an understanding of the idea of freedom in the past is an invaluable aid to the assessment of revolutionary thought to-day, we are commencing this series of quotations from writers and poets of other centuries in this country. It need hardly be said that we are not in the least actuated by nationalistic motives in conceiving this series in terms of British writers: rather, we feel that the idea of freedom, whose flame has never been extinguished in this country, gives great hope of that future conflagration which, in Britain as in other lands, will one day allow us to create a new society upon the ashes of the old.*

S. W. T.

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The "Freedom Group" had just taken over the old "Torch" office in Ossulston Street where much Anarchist history had been made and where more was to be made in the years that followed, for it was only by a tenacious struggle on the part of unknown and little known comrades that the "Anarchist" could be kept alive at all. Only those who have actively participated in the fight can know all the work and sacrifices entailed. If a cause can be measured by what its adherents will suffer for it, then we can say with sincerity and assurance that no other movement of the Left has produced such men and women as our cause has. We hope that their lives and work will be an inspiration and a spur to the young people of to-day to take up their fight and carry it through to its conclusion. Their efforts prepared the ground, it is for this generation to reap the harvest.

MAT KAVANAGH.

## THOUGHTS ON FREEDOM. I

★

"A human being is a member of the community, not as a limb is a member of the body, or as what is a part of a machine, intended only to contribute to some general, joint result. He was created not to be merged in the whole as a drop in the ocean, or as a particle of sand in the seashore, and to aid only in composing a man. He is an ultimate being, made for his own perfection as his highest end, made to maintain an individual existence, and to serve others only as far as consists with his own virtue and progress. Hitherto governments have tended greatly to obscure this importance of the individual, to depress him in his own eyes, to give him the idea of an outward interest more important than the invisible soul, and an outward authority more important than his own secret conscience. Rulers have called the private man the property of the State, meaning generally by the State themselves; and thus the many have been immolated to the few, and have even believed that this was their highest destination. These views cannot be too earnestly withstood. Nothing seems to me so needful as to give to the mind the consciousness—which governments have done so much to suppress—of its own separate work. Let the individual feel that he is placed in the community not to part with his individuality, or to become a tool. To me the progress of society consists in nothing more than in bringing out the individual, in giving him a consciousness of his own being, and in quickening him to strengthen and elevate his mind."

SHELLEY.



# ANARCHISTS IN JAPAN

The Japanese working-class movement began towards the beginning of the present century, when militant elements in Japan started to associate with labour elements in other countries. It is timely to recall that the Socialist Congress of Amsterdam in 1904, the Japanese representative Kataiama and the Russian representative Plekhanov, shook hands in front of the Congress, affirming their solidarity, although Japan and Russia were at war, to loud applause at this internationalist and anti-militarist gesture.

In 1899 an association was founded for socialist study, chiefly by intellectuals, but also with the support of some labour elements, especially metal-workers. In 1901 this was converted into the Japanese Socialist Party. There was an Anarchist group within it, nevertheless, amongst whom was Denjiro Kotoku. It was then that he published his book "The Essence of Socialism" and translated Kropotkin's "The Conquest of Bread."

Many workers organized in the new proletarian movement; strikes began to break out in important industries, in some cases assuming a violent character. As a result there were many persecutions by the authorities, and many militants were imprisoned, among them Kotoku and another Japanese Anarcho-Syndicalist militant who later came to be very well known, Osugi.

Some years after the war between Russia and Japan, Kotoku went to the States. There he came into contact with the Industrial Workers of the World. He studied the principles and organization of the industrial union movement, and after his return to Japan, explained the principles of revolutionary syndicalism there.

Soon the Anarchist organization had to assume a clandestine nature. It issued many periodicals and pamphlets. Kotoku edited an Anarchist newspaper called *Free Thought*, also underground.

## Anarchists Executed

In 1910, 24 militants of the workers' movement were condemned to death, among them Kotoku and his companion Suha Kanno. They were accused of plotting against the Emperor. 12 of them were later given penal servitude for life; the others, including Kotoku and Kanno, were executed, on the 24th January, 1911.

A few years of terror followed but in 1913 it was again possible to resume the publication of *Free Thought*, under the direction of Osugi and Arahata. The organized work of the movement began again, first of all secretly, later openly.

In 1923, Osugi and his family were murdered. A group of political gangsters (among them an

lished the works of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Osugi and others.

In a message to the secretariat of the I.W.M.A. in July, 1926, it gave details of a meeting in Tokyo on the anniversary of the death of Bakunin. Six Anarchist militants were announced as orators. The police, situated at the side of the platform, seized every speaker the moment he began to speak.

In the same year, the Korean Anarchist, Buku Recu, was condemned to death in Tokyo for "revolutionary activity", the Emperor converting it into a sentence for life.

In 1931 the I.W.M.A. received a message from its Japanese section describing the Japanese Anarchist movement. We reproduce below part of it referring to a characteristic episode in the class-struggle.

## Industrial Direct Action

"The workers in the firm Nibou Senju Kaisha" says the report, "were organized in the Anarcho-Syndicalist movement, all 180 men and 60 women employed in the factory. In 1927, they gained a very great victory by means of direct action. The employer had sacked two workers without reasonable excuse. The workers in the firm protested, and demanded that the two be reinstated. The employer refused, and all the workers went on strike. They refused to leave the factory, and in an attempt to crush the stay-in strike, the employer barricaded it from the outside, so that no food could go in to the strikers.

"The entire working population near the factory sympathized with the strike. In many places they went on strike an hour every day in sympathy. The families and friends of the strikers broke into the employer's house many times, until finally he sought refuge in the Chief of Police's department.

"After five days some of the strikers fell ill. They were taken to hospital, but the doctors refused to admit them. Only after a demonstration of the Anarcho-Syndicalist organization outside the hospital gates, did the doctors climb down. Those remaining in the factory continued on hunger-strike.

"During the night of the First of May, an anarcho-syndicalist militant, belonging to the printers' organization, climbed to the top of the factory chimney, 130 feet high. On the top of the chimney he planted a black flag, and refused to come down from the chimney until the hunger-striking workers had beaten the boss. This worker stayed several days on top of the chimney, without food or sleep.

"The organization held a meeting outside the same factory on the First of May, breaking the

Manchuria. The militants sending us the message, said there was a wave of terror throughout Japan, and that the organization had to return to illegality. They stated that they were not sure if communication with the I.W.M.A. could be maintained. Their last words were:

"The Government and the capitalist class are trying to justify their occupation of Manchuria with propaganda spread through the Press, radio and public meetings. But the population is passive and indifferent. The people do not feel enmity with the Chinese. The newspapers tell them about atrocities committed by the Chinese, and about the anti-Japanese mentality of the Chinese. But in spite of that, the people have no feelings of enmity towards China."

The war has gone on many years since then. We do not know what has been the fate of the Anarchist movement or the working-class movement in general in that country. But we may suppose that our militants have gone on with the class-struggle against State and capitalist oppression.

JOHN ANDERSON,  
Stockholm, 25/6/45.

(I.W.M.A. Press Service).

[We have further information on the above, which we trust to reproduce at an early date.—Eds.]

## FACTS ABOUT BELSEN

The British newspapers, in their great outcry against the horrors of the German concentration camps, were full of moral indignation against the methods employed by the S.S. guards against the prisoners. An exceptionally outspoken article by Alan Moorehead in the July issue of the literary magazine, *Horizon*, reveals, however, that the S.S. men were not the only practitioners in brutality, but were themselves the victims of completely unwarranted tortures.

"As we approached the cells of the S.S. guards the sergeant's language became ferocious.

"We have had an interrogation this morning," the captain said. "I'm afraid they are not a pretty sight."

"Who does the interrogation?"

"A Frenchman. I believe he was sent up here specially from the French underground to do the job."

The sergeant unbolted the first door and flung it back with a crack like thunder. He strode into the cell, jabbing a metal spike in front of him.

# PRISONS Theory and

The Home Office has recently published for general consumption its report on *Prisons and Borstals*. It is a masterpiece of understatement, carefully written to disguise what really happens in prisons. No direct lie is told, and yet the whole is so carefully framed in its prim civil servant's style that no-one who did not know what prison is really like could imagine how much has been left unsaid, how many unpleasant and sordid facts have been omitted so that the authorities may pose as the enlightened benefactors of humanity who are trying to reform criminals by kindness and bring a new reign of enlightened justice on the earth.

The anarchists are perhaps more fitted than most people to criticise such a report because, even when they have not themselves seen the insides of prisons, they have comrades and friends whose opinions have led them to be familiar with prison conditions from direct experience. We are thus able to expose the hypocrisy and untruthfulness of this report. So far as we could see, there was only one sentence that indicated the real reign of arbitrary tyranny that exists in English prisons. "In effect, it is never an offence to talk, but it may be an offence not to stop talking when told to do so."

## THE REAL PICTURE

A few details will help to fill out the real picture of prison life.

We are given details of the composition of prison diet, but we are not told that it is usually cooked so badly that prisoners at first find it almost inedible, or that the bread is often rancid and usually stale.

We are told that the men empty their 'slops' in the morning at the sanitary recess, but we are not given details of the disgusting conditions in which the privies are usually kept, or the humiliating scramble of twenty or more men to empty their 'slops' in a few minutes.

Several paragraphs are devoted to the medical amenities of prisons. But we are not told of the cursory nature of medical examinations on entry. (One prison doctor used to ask "Any boils or pimples?" and on receiving a negative answer would pass the man as fit without even touching him.) Nor are we told of the curt and summary way in which most prison medical officers deal with men who go sick.

We are told of the facilities which exist, on paper, for psychological misfits. But who ever heard of a homosexual receiving any advantage in an English prison from provisions of this kind?



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In 1923, Osugi and his family were murdered. A group of political gangsters (among them an Army general) broke into their house, strangling the entire family.

This was part of a plot against the workers' movement in general and especially against the Anarchists. But the movement carried on, and in 1923 it established its first contacts with the I.W.M.A., the syndicalist International formed the previous year. It was the "Jiju-Rango" organization, formed of the various syndicalist organizations, that then affiliated with the I.W.M.A.

There were at that time some differences between the Japanese Anarchists and Revolutionary Syndicalists, on the role of the peasants as against the industrial proletariat of the city, causing long discussion on the principles and programme of the movement. In July, 1930, however, it was possible for them to unite the two tendencies in one organization, which ratified its affiliation with the I.W.A.A. In the same year, the I.W.M.A. Declaration of Principles was published in Japanese for the first time.

### Anarchist Publications

A Youth organization was also formed, under the name of the "Black Youth", which took the initiative in publishing books and pamphlets. Its name was taken to symbolize its opposition to "White" reaction and "Red" Bolshevism. Apart from its journal *Black Youth* it published many other reviews of a more sporadic character, e.g. *Free Front*, *Black Flag*, etc. It also pub-

60 women employed in the factory. In 1927, they gained a very great victory by means of direct action. The employer had sacked two workers without reasonable excuse. The workers in the firm protested, and demanded that the two be reinstated. The employer refused, and all the workers went on strike. They refused to leave the factory, and in an attempt to crush the stay-in strike, the employer barricaded it from the outside, so that no food could go in to the strikers.

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"The organization held a meeting outside the same factory on the First of May, breaking the police cordon, entering the factory, and assisting the strikers within. Many comrades were arrested, but the Chief of Police requested the employer to open negotiations with the strikers. They made the following stipulations:

"The employer had to pay for the medical attention to the strikers, coming to some 5,000 yen. He had to pay 1,500 yen as compensation to the strikers. He had to pay the salaries for the days lost on the strike, between 21st April and 11th May, coming to 4,690 yen. The three days following the strike were to be considered as holidays, paid for at the rate of 60%. The workers were then to be medically examined and if unfit for work, to have a further vacation at his expense. Finally, the two workers sacked were to be reinstated."

The report concluded: "On the 12th May, the end of the strike, all met in the street. The comrade on top of the chimney was brought down and taken to hospital. On the 17th and 18th May we organized a great demonstration celebrating the victory, and carried on our banners the message that this was a step forward in the struggle ending only with the end of wage-slavery."

### Opposition To The War

The last message received by the I.W.M.A. from its Japanese section was just after the Japanese Government had declared war against

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Stockholm, 25/6/45.

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"We have had an interrogation this morning," the captain said. 'I'm afraid they are not a pretty sight.'

"Who does the interrogation?"

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"Get up," shouted the sergeant. They were all on their feet now, but supporting themselves against the wall.

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Same thing in the next cell and the next where the men who were bleeding and were dirty were moaning something in German."

We can understand the men who, in their anger at seeing the brutalities committed by the S.S. guards at Belsen, shot them out of hand. We should not condemn these men, for what they saw probably made them so angry that they did not wait to consider that a good portion of the horror at Belsen was due to the starvation caused by the disruption of transport by the British air force. (Undoubtedly in the case of the majority of recent deaths in the great con-

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MORE ABOUT DETENTION  
CAMPS

Life in detention at Spike Hill, Castleton.

Through the Press



the initiative in publishing books and pamphlets. Its name was taken to symbolize its opposition to "White" reaction and "Red" Bolshevism. Apart from its journal *Black Youth* it published many other reviews of a more sporadic character, e.g. *Free Front*, *Black Flag*, etc. It also pub-

wage-slavery.

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## MORE ABOUT DETENTION CAMPS

I was in detention at Stake Hill, Castleton, near Rochdale, about 15 months ago.

The food was sadly lacking in quantity, in fact we were continually half starved. In addition, it was extremely difficult to avoid being put on a punishment diet of bread and water, so you will understand that we knew what it felt like to be really hungry.

Our greatest worry was to avoid being put on a charge, for we would be "crimed" on the slightest provocation, and sometimes literally for nothing at all, and when we were taken in front of the officer the "staff" would tell the most atrocious lies—not that that was even necessary, because the officer was always on his side and we were always punished.

If we dared to say anything in our own defence the punishment was increased, such punishment being deprivation of remission and, when it was no longer possible, bread and water diet.

There was one ordinary lavatory in each cage; no separate urinal, which had to serve for more than 70 men. It had to be used in full view of everyone, there being no covering, but we were only allowed to use it upon permission being given by the "staff", whereupon a long queue would form. You can imagine our discomfort during the cold weather.

*Reveille*, 28/7/45.

## TRY AGAIN

Police faces were deep crimson to-day. During the night burglars rifled detective offices at police headquarters and took 100,000 dollars (£25,000) worth of evidence.

Officials said that hundreds of envelopes containing evidence to be used in pending criminal cases were missing. Their contents included cash and jewellery recovered by the police in dozens of robbery and burglary cases.

Whoever raided the detective office, however, overlooked another 200,000 dollars in cash.

*Evening Standard*, 31/7/45.

## PROMISING YOUNG MAN

Advertiser is free for employment; fluent French, some Spanish, Russian, Latin, Greek, typing; 3½ years R.A.F. (five times promoted, airman to flying officer); related to nobility; drive any car, including Rolls-Royce, clean licence; much travelled in Europe, including Sweden, three times America, twice Canada; educated Harrow, Trinity College, Cambridge; biography in *Who's Who*; author of three books, lecturer.—Write Box L.1673, *The Times*, E.C.4.

# Through the Press

## A PROPHECY

### SOCIALIST EMPIRE

There are now three Empire countries with Socialist Governments—Britain, Australia and New Zealand. South Africa has a Coalition. Canada has a Liberal administration, whose lead was reduced by the Conservatives in the recent election.

Southern Rhodesia, self-governing colony, has a United Party Government. The Labour Opposition there is more to the Right than is the Socialist Party here.

*Evening Standard*, 27/7/45.

We venture a prophecy that that headline "Socialist Empire" now used slightly ironically, will, like a phrase introduced in similar fashion ("His Majesty's Opposition") pass into serious usage. Needless to say, it will not mean that the Empire is "Socialist" but that Socialism is Imperialist.

## THE WEALTHY HOMELESS

Fantastic offers are being made by racegoers for accommodation in York during the St. Leger week, which opens on September 4.

One bookmaker is said to have offered £200 for a house close to the course for the week. Another offer of £60 was made for a smaller house.

Householders in working-class districts near the racecourse have been offered from £3 to £5 per night for bed and breakfast.

*Daily Herald*, 2/8/45.

As a Judge so wisely remarked recently, you cannot obey the law of the jungle and take over an empty house when you are homeless . . . there is a different method operating in a civilized country.

## GRANDMOTHERS ON THE WAR-PATH

Eighty-five specially trained Wacs—nearly all 60 or over—will leave soon for the American zone of Germany on an Intelligence mission the nature of which they have not yet been told.

*News Chronicle*, 1/8/45.

## JOE'S TUMMY HURTS

Not until today was it revealed that Stalin had been confined to the "Little Kremlin" here on doctor's orders since Sunday. His illness was described as only "a slight indisposition." It was believed to be a cold and indigestion, not uncommon ailments here.

*The Stars and Stripes*, 1/8/45.

In Potsdam indigestion—In Berlin typhus.

## JOURNALISTIC UNDERSTATEMENT

MADRID, July 27 (AP)—An estimated 30,000 political prisoners still remain in Spanish jails, although more than 4,500 have been released in connection with the 9th anniversary of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, it was learned here yesterday.

Although on the spot the A.P. correspondent seems to be badly informed. The most conservative figures of political prisoners in Spain are 200,000. But perhaps, as in this country, people can be sent to prison for holding views which do not agree with those of the Government and at the same time be classified as criminals.

## RUSSIAN BLIMPS

The Russian outlook is inflexible on the status and rank of officers, especially those from other nations, with whom they go into conference.

The point is worth emphasising, because it means that the Russians will not hold a conference if officers of the appropriate rank cannot attend, and also acts as a brake on the British and American tendency towards unorthodoxy in reaching decisions. When, for instance, General Clark, commanding the United States forces in Austria, was absent in Brazil, the proposed conference of Allied commanders in Vienna had to be reduced to a lower level instead of allowing General Gunther Clarke, his deputy, to take his place.

*Manchester Guardian*, 1/8/45.

## CONSISTENCY

Forecasting that Germany's future would be the main subject at the resumed Berlin talks, *Pravda*, official Communist party organ, said to-day "Germany bears responsibility for the war, and must carry out all the demands the Allies present to her."

"It is significant that in certain circles in Western Germany voices have begun to be raised denying the Germans' responsibility for the war and its consequences. The statement of the Bavarian bishops denying that the German people bear responsibility recalls similar statements heard after the first world war."

*Daily Telegraph*, 30/7/45.

We can state on the best authority that nothing appearing in *Pravda* or other Moscow newspaper bears any similarity whatever to any statements heard there after the first world war.

## OVER-RATED

Costs of each M.P. have been high for the minority parties. Experts estimate the average expenses of a candidate at £500. The Liberals put 307 in the field, at a total cost of about £153,500. Ten Liberals were elected, so each Liberal M.P. cost £15,300.

For Common Wealth representation is almost as costly—£11,500 for their one seat.

The Communists have two candidates elected. They cost £5,250 each.

*Evening Standard*, 30/7/45.

## THEIR PENSIONS ARE SUFFICIENT

The list of pensions paid by the State appears in the Finance Accounts of the United Kingdom. There is one unique pension—a hereditary pension of £5,000 a year payable "to whom the title of Earl Nelson shall descend." The present Lord Nelson is 78, succeeded to the title in 1913.

*Evening Standard*, 28/7/45.

An estimation of how much the Nelsons have raked off would suggest it would have paid better to have lost Trafalgar. The poor devils under him, by the way, never even got a pension when they were alive.



# ANARCHISTS IN JAPAN

and the works of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Osugi and others.

In a message to the secretariat of the I.W.M.A. in July, 1926, it gave details of a meeting in Tokyo on the anniversary of the death of Bakunin. Six Anarchist militants were pronounced as orators. The police, situated at the side of the platform, seized every speaker the moment he began to speak.

In the same year, the Korean Anarchist, Buku, was condemned to death in Tokyo for "revolutionary activity", the Emperor converting it into a sentence for life.

In 1931 the I.W.M.A. received a message from its Japanese section describing the Japanese Anarchist movement. We reproduce a part of it referring to a characteristic episode in the class-struggle.

## Industrial Direct Action

"The workers in the firm Nibou Senju Gisha" says the report, "were organized in the Anarcho-Syndicalist movement, all 180 men and women employed in the factory. In 1927, they gained a very great victory by means of direct action. The employer had sacked two workers without reasonable excuse. The workers of the firm protested, and demanded that they be reinstated. The employer refused, and the workers went on strike. They refused to leave the factory, and in an attempt to crush the stay-in strike, the employer barricaded it from the outside, so that no food could go in to the strikers.

"The entire working population near the factory sympathized with the strike. In many places they went on strike an hour every day in sympathy. The families and friends of the strikers broke into the employer's house many times, until finally he sought refuge in the Chief of Police's department.

"After five days some of the strikers fell ill. They were taken to hospital, but the doctors refused to admit them. Only after a demonstration of the Anarcho-Syndicalist organization outside the hospital gates, did the doctors climb down. Those remaining in the factory continued on hunger-strike.

"During the night of the First of May, an Anarcho-syndicalist militant, belonging to the strikers' organization, climbed to the top of the factory chimney, 130 feet high. On the top of the chimney he planted a black flag, and refused to come down from the chimney until the hunger-striking workers had beaten the boss. His worker stayed several days on top of the chimney, without food or sleep.

"The organization held a meeting outside the factory on the First of May, breaking the

Manchuria. The militants sending us the message, said there was a wave of terror throughout Japan, and that the organization had to return to illegality. They stated that they were not sure if communication with the I.W.M.A. could be maintained. Their last words were:

*"The Government and the capitalist class are trying to justify their occupation of Manchuria with propaganda spread through the Press, radio and public meetings. But the population is passive and indifferent. The people do not feel enmity with the Chinese. The newspapers tell them about atrocities committed by the Chinese, and about the anti-Japanese mentality of the Chinese. But in spite of that, the people have no feelings of enmity towards China."*

The war has gone on many years since then. We do not know what has been the fate of the Anarchist movement or the working-class movement in general in that country. But we may suppose that our militants have gone on with the class-struggle against State and capitalist oppression.

JOHN ANDERSON,  
Stockholm, 25/6/45.

(I.W.M.A. Press Service).

[We have further information on the above, which we trust to reproduce at an early date.—Eds.]

## FACTS ABOUT BELSEN

The British newspapers, in their great outcry against the horrors of the German concentration camps, were full of moral indignation against the methods employed by the S.S. guards against the prisoners. An exceptionally outspoken article by Alan Moorehead in the July issue of the literary magazine, *Horizon*, reveals, however, that the S.S. men were not the only practitioners in brutality, but were themselves the victims of completely unwarranted tortures.

*"As we approached the cells of the S.S. guards the sergeant's language became ferocious.*

*'We have had an interrogation this morning,' the captain said. 'I'm afraid they are not a pretty sight.'*

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# PRISONS

## Theory and Reality

The Home Office has recently published for general consumption its report on *Prisons and Borstals*. It is a masterpiece of understatement, carefully written to disguise what really happens in prisons. No direct lie is told, and yet the whole is so carefully framed in its prim civil servant's style that no-one who did not know what prison is really like could imagine how much has been left unsaid, how many unpleasant and sordid facts have been omitted so that the authorities may pose as the enlightened benefactors of humanity who are trying to reform criminals by kindness and bring a new reign of enlightened justice on the earth.

The anarchists are perhaps more fitted than most people to criticise such a report because, even when they have not themselves seen the insides of prisons, they have comrades and friends whose opinions have led them to be familiar with prison conditions from direct experience. We are thus able to expose the hypocrisy and untruthfulness of this report. So far as we could see, there was only one sentence that indicated the real reign of arbitrary tyranny that exists in English prisons. "In effect, it is never an offence to talk, but it may be an offence not to stop talking when told to do so."

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often assume great importance to the inmates of a prison, but in the end any discussion of prison life must come round to the old question of the warders, from whose negligence or brutality arises most of the misery of prison life. On this matter the report is almost completely silent, contenting itself with saying that "the staff are encouraged in the view that firmness and humanity will in the long run secure a more willing response to authority than a mere reliance on the repressive force of authority". How this advice is interpreted by warders is known very well by any man who has been in prison. The general experience on this point is borne out by the statements of a writer in the *Sunday Dispatch* of the 29th July, a professional man who had served a sentence for a motoring offence:

"During my stay in prison," he says, "I suffered much humiliation—even mental agony—under the treatment of the officers, who are known as 'screws'. Let me say at once that there are 'screws' who are humane and who take their responsibilities seriously. These, however, are only a tiny minority. Some of the 'screws' are uneducated, sadistic bullies. Their language would not be tolerated in any Army camp to-day.

"Knowing that the average prisoner dares not risk even the charge of dumb insolence, these men abuse all the privileges of their uniform . . . This matter of the 'screws' is one that is consistently at the bottom of all cases of prison disaffection, even of mutiny.

"Almost all of them are known to take bribes. Many of them do not hesitate to approach prisoners whom they regard as wealthy. The procedure is simple. In exchange for, say £5 a week or perhaps a lump sum, the 'screw' undertakes to supply items of food and a few cigarettes. The practice is almost universal.

"But even then the particular type of officer to whom I refer often debases himself still further. He will take the money—payable outside, of course—through a friend, and refuse to deliver. He knows, of course, that the prisoner has neither remedy nor any chance of revenge."

All that has been said here has been confirmed by many people who have been in prison and who know the actions of the warders. There is even something to be added, for there are 'screws' who will sink so low as to steal the few petty items which the prisoners can have sent in from outside. The



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The organization held a meeting outside the factory on the First of May, breaking the police cordon, entering the factory, and assisting the strikers within. Many comrades were arrested, but the Chief of Police requested the employer to open negotiations with the strikers. They made the following stipulations:

"The employer had to pay for the medical attention to the strikers, coming to some 5,000 yen. He had to pay 1,500 yen as compensation to the strikers. He had to pay the salaries for the days lost on the strike, between 21st April and 11th May, coming to 4,690 yen. The three days following the strike were to be considered holidays, paid for at the rate of 60%. The workers were then to be medically examined and unfit for work, to have a further vacation at the expense. Finally, the two workers sacked were to be reinstated."

The report concluded: "On the 12th May, the end of the strike, all met in the street. The comrade on top of the chimney was brought down and taken to hospital. On the 17th and 18th May we organized a great demonstration celebrating the victory, and carried on our banners the message that this was a step forward in the struggle ending only with the end of wage-slavery."

## Opposition To The War

The last message received by the I.W.M.A. from its Japanese section was just after the Japanese Government had declared war against

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The whole idea of a prison is foreign to the idea of freedom or a free society. Government, on the other hand, needs its prisons, and it is inevitable that a system which gives some men power over others in an almost unlimited degree will lead to the inhumanities which are practiced in the best prisons. No prison could be as free from fault as one would gather from this misleading report of the Home Office. There is only one way to reform prisons. Destroy them. And that can only be done by destroying the society for which they exist.

## NIGERIAN STRIKE RELIEF FUND

In connection with the Nigerian General Strike, mentioned in a recent issue of *War Commentary*, a Strike Relief Fund has been established to assist the strikers in their fight against British imperialism. Contributions should be sent to Nigeria Strike Relief Fund, c/o West African Students Union, 1, South Villas, Camden Square, London, N.W.1.

## TAME COMMUNISTS

In Berlin the Communists are obviously



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As a Judge so wisely remarked recently, "You cannot obey the law of the jungle and make over an empty house when you are homeless . . . there is a different method of operating in a civilized country."

## GRANDMOTHERS ON THE WAR-PATH

Eighty-five specially trained Wacs—nearly all over—will leave soon for the American front in Germany on an Intelligence mission the nature of which they have not yet been told.

*News Chronicle*, 1/8/45.

## JOE'S TUMMY HURTS

Not until today was it revealed that Stalin had been confined to the "Little Kremlin" here on doctor's orders since Sunday. His illness was described as only "a slight indisposition." It was believed to be a cold and indigestion, not uncommon ailments here.

*The Stars and Stripes*, 1/8/45.

In Potsdam indigestion—In Berlin typhus.

## JOURNALISTIC UNDERSTATEMENT

MADRID, July 27 (AP)—An estimated 30,000 political prisoners still remain in Spanish jails, although more than 4,500 have been released in connection with the 9th anniversary of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, it was learned here yesterday.

Although on the spot the A.P. correspondent seems to be badly informed. The most conservative figures of political prisoners in Spain are 200,000. But perhaps, as in this country, people can be sent to prison for holding views which do not agree with those of the Government and at the same time be classified as criminals.

## RUSSIAN BLIMPS

The Russian outlook is inflexible on the status and rank of officers, especially those from other nations, with whom they go into conference.

The point is worth emphasising, because it means that the Russians will not hold a conference if officers of the appropriate rank cannot attend, and also acts as a brake on the British and American tendency towards unorthodoxy in reaching decisions. When, for instance, General Clark, commanding the United States forces in Austria, was absent in Brazil, the proposed conference of Allied commanders in Vienna had to be reduced to a lower level instead of allowing General Gunther Clarke, his deputy, to take his place.

*Manchester Guardian*, 1/8/45.

## CONSISTENCY

Forecasting that Germany's future would be the main subject at the resumed Berlin talks, Pravda, official Communist party organ, said today "Germany bears responsibility for the war, and must carry out all the demands the Allies present to her."

"It is significant that in certain circles in Western Germany voices have begun to be raised denying the Germans' responsibility for the war and its consequences. The statement of the Bavarian bishops denying that the German people bear responsibility recalls similar statements heard after the first world war."

*Daily Telegraph*, 30/7/45.

We can state on the best authority that nothing appearing in *Pravda* or other Moscow newspaper bears any similarity whatever to any statements heard there after the first world war.

## OVER-RATED

Costs of each M.P. have been high for the minority parties. Experts estimate the average expenses of a candidate at £500. The Liberals put 307 in the field, at a total cost of about £153,500. Ten Liberals were elected, so each Liberal M.P. cost £15,300.

For Common Wealth representation is almost as costly—£11,500 for their one seat.

The Communists have two candidates elected. They cost £5,250 each.

*Evening Standard*, 30/7/45.

## THEIR PENSIONS ARE SUFFICIENT

The list of pensions paid by the State appears in the Finance Accounts of the United Kingdom. There is one unique pension—a hereditary pension of £5,000 a year payable "to whom the title of Earl Nelson shall descend." The present Lord Nelson is 78, succeeded to the title in 1913.

*Evening Standard*, 28/7/45.

An estimation of how much the Nelsons have raked off would suggest it would have paid better to have lost Trafalgar. The poor devils under him, by the way, never even got a pension when they were alive.

## TAME COMMUNISTS

In Berlin the Communists are obviously strongest, not only because they enjoy Russian patronage, but also because they have almost their complete pre-Hitler leadership in Berlin, freshly returned from a 12 years' exile in Moscow and armed with long-prepared political directives. The purposeful clarity of their statements contrasts impressively with the somewhat fumbling first steps of the other re-born parties.

It also contrasts with the policy last pursued by the German Communists themselves before the advent of Hitler. The very same men who now reject any modelling of Germany on the Soviet pattern and call for a democratic Republic were, in the years of 1930 and 1933, concentrating all their political guns on the democratic Weimar Republic, and even occasionally allying themselves with the Nazis in the fight for its overthrow, under the slogan: "After Hitler it will be our turn." At that time their main enemies were the Social Democrats, dubbed by them "Social Fascists." Now they aspire to an almost complete fusion with the Social Democrats.

*Observer*, 22/7/45.

## THE HAND GRENADE

"We are not fighting for conquest and there is not one piece of territory or one thing of monetary value that we want out of this war."

To GIs standing in Berlin's drowsy summer heat, the words may have sounded like just another innocuous statement of goodwill exactly the kind of thing you might expect on such an occasion, a formal flag-raising ceremony. But to the U.S. Senate, President Truman's speech had all the calming effect of a hand grenade with the pin pulled.

A dozen senators immediately put themselves on record as differing with the President to the extent of demanding that America retain control of strategic Pacific islands wrested from the Japanese at great cost in lives.

*Stars and Stripes*, 28/7/45.

## A TRUE DEMOCRAT

In fact, when a friend of mine met him on his return the other day, Dr. Hewlett Johnson was wearing both the beautiful diamond-studded 5in. long gold crucifix presented to him by the Patriarch of Moscow and the gold hammer and sickle medal he received from the Soviet workers.

*News Chronicle*, 1/8/45.



# FACTS BEHIND DOCKS DISPUTE MINORITIES IN THE

By Our Industrial Correspondent

In view of the confused and sometimes false reports of the London Docks dispute given by the national press, from the *Daily Herald* to the *Daily Worker*, we feel it is incumbent on the smaller papers, and particularly *War Commentary* to scotch the lies and inaccuracies and to give the true facts in the dispute at the Surrey Docks.

Nearly everyone will be aware that the dockers have, for some time, been working at a very heavy pressure—a rate of work which the dockers describe as 'at break neck speed'. The rate of work was intensified during the preparations for the invasion of Europe, after D-day and right up until V.E.-day.

Dockers with whom I talked told me that this involved being virtually 'locked in on the job' for 13 to 16 hours a day, with no opportunity to stop for normal meals. No men, not even these tough and work-hardened dockers, could keep working at that rate for long without a complete break-down in health. Even in peace time the dockers are, as a general rule, thrown on to the scrap heap at the age of 45.

The reward given for their herculean efforts to keep the ships moving was a Second Front Agreement under which they were paid 2s. 6d. per ton for unloading, plus the lavish praise and sickening back scratching of the press and the T.U. bosses. This Second Front Agreement was suddenly broken by the employers at the end of May. No warning or reason was given to the men. The dockers were then expected to continue to work as they had done before with the exception that they now received a slash in their pay packets of approximately 60s. a week. J. Donovan, T. & G.W.U. national secretary, Docks Group, admitted that "the docker now finds himself in a worse position financially than the workers in industry generally". He goes on to say "the dockers' basic wage of 16s. per day represents a rise of only 23% during the war and was the lowest of any industry". According to Bert Aylwood of the Docks Progressive Committee, this is approximately the same wage paid to dockers 25 years ago.

Faced with the position of having the Second Front Agreement smashed by the bosses, which meant reverting to the low wage level, the dockers refused to "work themselves to death" and reverted to a normal rate of working. This, incidentally, is the policy which has led to the accusation of "Go Slow", representing a distortion of the policy of the dockers. The dockers themselves informed me that even after the breaking of the Second Front Agreement the wharf average was between 65 and 80 tons, and that the accusation of "Go Slow" was only an excuse used by the bosses and authorities to attack the workers.

dren. When I met this docker he had just sold some clothing to provide food for his family, public relief having been refused.

The charge that the dockers were delaying the unloading of essential goods, such as food and building materials, is untrue, and is obviously a tactic used by the bosses and press to work up agitation against the men. The facts are that even before the dispute took place men were being stood off, particularly at the Royal group of docks. Here whole groups were idle for as long as two weeks at a time.

It should be remembered that all these men came under the Mobilisation of Labour orders. The bosses here had used the government directions and Essential Work Orders to screw down the workers as they had done in other places previously reported in *War Commentary*. The bosses used the stick placed into their hands with such effect that, in the dockers' own words, "ordinary visits to the lavatories were frowned upon".

The employers and authorities appear to be looking for trouble. They without doubt precipitated the present dispute. First, without consultation, they slashed wages; secondly, they refused to pay the 12s. a day attendance money, normally paid to dockers who are "standing by"; thirdly, they displayed incredible truculence in locking out the dockers and refusing to negotiate with them.

These are not methods calculated to sooth the breasts of the dockers. These workers are not political fools. Members of the Docks Progressive Committee told me they were aware that this was merely a continuation of the struggle that these men were carrying on for years before the war. Everywhere I found a lack of confidence in the T.U. leaders. The demand from the trade unions that the dockers must return to work on the bosses' conditions before negotiations will be started, is bitterly resented. Dick Barratt, general secretary of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union could not even find a seconder at a meeting of dockers on the 24th July for a proposal that the men should return to "normal" work. The efforts of the T. & G.W.U. have been as abortive.

The complete solidarity of the stevedores and dockers is much in evidence. Hundreds of these men have put up a struggle over ten weeks—a struggle not only against the bosses, but also against a combination of the Ministry of War Transport, the National Dock Labour Corporation, L.C.C., Port of London Authority, and T.U. officials. It is obvious that hunger and false public opinion are weapons used to break the determination of the dockers, but as yet there is little sign of a weakening of morale. One of the major weaknesses of the dockers was openly

*News Chronicle* of August 1st and 2nd respectively, that there was animosity between the dockers and soldiers, is nonsense. Both the men and their committee expressed to me their sympathy and understanding for the soldiers' circumstances. The soldiers were acting under orders. There would be serious consequences for them if they refused to obey those orders.

Some of these soldiers were far from happy. One group told me that this is not the first time they have been used for strike-breaking. In the case of these men the previous instance was at Plymouth. Obviously there was an attempt by the authorities to put up a ban on fraternisation. There were nearly as many police and red-caps outside the dock gates as there were dockers. This did not prevent the dockers from having a whip-round for cigarettes for the soldiers.

The dockers are persistently and pointedly asking who is behind the decision to use the troops. They could no longer blame the Tories, and they have few political illusions. Their long and grim struggle has given them a positive and intelligent perception of political and social conditions that militate against the workers.

Behind the slogan of the dockers "A decent day's pay for a decent day's work" lie all the issues that have been before the dockers for the last half century. The lessons of disputes such as this must be learned if an equitable society is to be achieved. It is imperative in that struggle for the workers to close their ranks and abolish the divisions amongst themselves. The agglomeration of trade unions and T.U. groups in evidence in this dispute is an obstacle to the solidarity that is essential in the common struggle. One union for one industry would co-ordinate and strengthen the workers' voice and claims, and cancel out the divisions and fundamental weaknesses that are obvious now.

A Strike Fund has been opened by the Docks Progressive Committee. The Treasurer is Harry Whitewood, 60, Hawstead Road, London S.E.6. Donations to this fund will be of great assistance to the dockers.

## MINORITIES IN THE

There is a story about President Inönü of Turkey that although he and the late dictator Kemal Ataturk, were both agnostics, when Ataturk died he had him buried according to Moslem rites. On someone asking him why he did this, he explained that one never knew what might as well make sure—even if there was a God it hadn't done any harm . . . years later he signed a mutual non-aggression pact with Hitler, and when told that Hitler would not keep his word, he made the same excuse—he never knew and it couldn't do any harm . . . Many people seem to have reasoned on the same lines in voting Labour. They didn't believe one never knew . . .

That, incidentally, was the line adopted by many of the minority socialist parties in urging people to vote Labour. It is a trifle hypocritical for Communists and Common-Wealthers to have used that line when they themselves were in other constituencies splitting the vote by making a direct present to the Tories of certain seats. An excuse made, however hypocritical is that if Labour were in power people would see through the illusion, and not vote for them again. In other words, having urged them to vote Labour (which they did without reservations) they would then turn round and say "I told you they were no good," when they actually said just the reverse.

### Death Of The Liberals

It is a little amusing to note how the minority parties fared. The Liberals are at last dead. The ten Liberal M.P.s are the last remnants of the Liberal Party. The schemes of all the rich-quick-Wallingfords who wanted to use the dying Liberal Party as an easy avenue into Parliament failed. In future they will have to side into the main parties.

The Communist line of the Popular Front and its variations have died a sickly death. From 1936 to 1938 the Communists urged alliance with Liberals, etc. as the way to win the election. The Left Book Club and its cohorts were most sceptical of the Labour Party method of isolation. Since the war and Russia's abhorrence

## OPEN THE CAMPS!

People are still suffering and dying in German concentration camps. The *News Chronicle* correspondent reveals that thousands of political prisoners who had been interned by the Nazis, of deportees who up to yesterday were called Hitler's slaves and whom General Eisenhower asked to revolt when they were

are celebrating a Labour victory, anti-Fascists are suffering in prisoner-of-war camps. As reported in the last issue of *War Commentary* that more than two hundred Spanish anti-Fascists were interned in a camp at Kirkstall in Lancashire. These men fought against Franco, had to take refuge in France, and



to work as they had done before the exception that they now received a slash in their pay packets of approximately 60s. a week. J. Donovan, T. & G.W.U. national secretary, Docks Group, admitted that "the docker now finds himself in a worse position financially than the workers in industry generally". He goes on to say "the dockers' basic wage of 16s. per day represents a rise of only 23% during the war and was the lowest of any industry". According to Bert Aylwood of the Docks Progressive Committee, this is approximately the same wage paid to dockers 25 years ago.

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After spending two days at the docks amongst these dockers, I wholeheartedly agree with them that the charge made by the national press and employers, that the dockers were "lying down on the job", is a flagrant and despicable lie.

The terms suitable to the bosses apparently were, that the men should work when the employers wanted them at the day rate of 16s. per day (although all dockers would not get this meagre amount). When the men were not required they would have to stand off, or return to the labour pool. The consequent results can be assessed by the experience of one docker who, two weeks ago, stood by, to work during the week. He was called upon for 2½ days; his wage at the end of his week was £1 13s. 5d; on this he had to maintain his wife and three chil-

children. The dockers are in a similar position. The Labour Party and the Docks Progressive Committee told me that this was merely a continuation of the struggle that these men were carrying on for years before the war. Everywhere I found a lack of confidence in the T.U. leaders. The demand from the trade unions that the dockers must return to work on the bosses' conditions before negotiations will be started, is bitterly resented. Dick Barratt, general secretary of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union could not even find a seconder at a meeting of dockers on the 24th July for a proposal that the men should return to "normal" work. The efforts of the T. & G.W.U. have been as abortive.

The complete solidarity of the stevedores and dockers is much in evidence. Hundreds of these men have put up a struggle over ten weeks—a struggle not only against the bosses, but also against a combination of the Ministry of War Transport, the National Dock Labour Corporation, L.C.C., Port of London Authority, and T.U. officials. It is obvious that hunger and false public opinion are weapons used to break the determination of the dockers, but as yet there is little sign of a weakening of morale. One of the major weaknesses of the dockers was openly admitted. This is, the divisions created in the ranks of these workers through the conflicting trade unions. All the other essentials for solidarity are there, but with some men in one union and the rest in another, and within each union the workers divided and sub-divided into differing groups, a condition of confusion arises. The advantages which would accrue to these dockers if they had one union would be great. The solidarity which already exists in spirit would materialise in fact. None the less, the fight being put up by these dockers against such tremendous odds is magnificent.

Efforts to break the will of the dockers by bringing in soldiers proved to be of no avail. It only succeeded in a further withdrawal of labour. The suggestion made in the *Star* and

things . . . will have to go back to serve the civil community . . . They will not be vital, many of them, to the war effort, even if we are pursuing with vigour as we are determined to do, the war against Japan. The character of the thing changes at that moment."

(Hansard).

What has happened to Mr. Bevin and the Labour and T.U. leaders since then, that they should require a large conscript battle-trained army on their hands? Although they have agreed with the principle of military conscription for Britain, a development thought to be impossible before the war (and while Hitler and Mussolini were a power in Europe), no explanations have yet been forthcoming.

Conscription in peace time, which cuts across such a deep fundamental right of the people, will take a lot of explaining away, even to a propaganda-doped public. The argument of war expediency is wearing rather thin.

If the Labour bosses, as the national press suggests, should succeed in fettering youth to a military machine through compulsory training for five years, the struggle for human rights and individual liberty becomes clarified. It is the workers who will have to maintain such ominous luxuries as large armed forces and the equipment which will be necessary. They, by taxation and lowered standards of living, will pay the piper

struggle to the workers to break the shackles and abolish the divisions amongst themselves. The agglomeration of trade unions and T.U. groups in evidence in this dispute is an obstacle to the solidarity that is essential in the common struggle. One union for one industry would co-ordinate and strengthen the workers' voice and claims, and cancel out the divisions and fundamental weaknesses that are obvious now.

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There are still dozens of concentration camps in Germany. Three months after victory, the "liberators" have not succeeded in suppressing what they themselves call the most abject feature of the Hitler regime. The camp at Belsen has been solemnly burned and its Commander will soon appear before an Allied tribunal as a war criminal. But other camps continue and to-day the victims of the Nazis who survived the tortures and famine are still hungry, deprived of their freedom and unable to get in touch with their families.

★ ★ ★

In this country too, at a time when people

are celebrating a Labour victory, anti-fascists are suffering in prisoner-of-war camps. reported in the last issue of *War Comment* that more than two hundred Spanish anti-fascists were interned in a camp at Kirkstall in Lancashire. These men fought against Franco, had to take refuge in France, were handed over by Pétain to the Germans and at the moment of liberation were transferred to the British and the Americans by members of the French resistance.

These men who for nearly ten years have been the victims of fascism are now prisoners of British democracy. On the 2 June they went on hunger strike, but stopped when they received the assurance that the situation would be changed. On the 12th July a member of the C.N.T., Augustin Soler, committed suicide by jumping from a window. After this tragic incident some of the Spanish prisoners were moved to another camp, but this was not enough. These men must be freed. They are all anti-fascists. Of 219 prisoners, 100 belonged to the Socialist Trade Union U.G.T., 82 to the C.N.T., and the rest to republican parties.

Their imprisonment is a scandal. On Spanish refugees are allowed to move about and work freely. Why this different treatment for men who have suffered more than others from the Nazi tyranny? We demand their unconditional release.

## 'Welcome to Russia'

We reproduce below the copy of a notice which was handed to a Scottish seaman on the arrival of his ship at Odessa on the 7th of April this year. The picture of Russia painted by this seaman in conversation with our comrades in Glasgow was far from the happy land, grateful to the good father Stalin for its salvation, which the Russian and English communists would like us to see. He spoke of starving children begging for food and being forced away from the sides of the ship by soldiers using the butts of their rifles. He also said, to illustrate the growing discontent of the people of this Black Sea port, that a girl whom he met took a Soviet badge from his buttonhole, spat on it, and threw it away. In fact, the impression gained from the following instructions is that of

(e) Under no circumstances should any foodstuffs, clothing, cigarettes, tobacco, ship's equipment or any other articles be sold, bartered or otherwise disposed of outside the ship or to Soviet citizens on board. This practice is forbidden by law and both parties are liable to punishment. Persons carrying parcels from the ship must be questioned and if necessary, searched as to the contents of the parcel: if he refuses his shore pass will be taken from him. The shore office cannot interfere with the Soviet enforcement of laws concerning entry or sale of commodities.

(f) It is wiser, from the viewpoint of health and other considerations, to refrain from intimate relations with local women. The enemy inflicts many of the women during the occupation



rest in the industrial field. They have been of betrayal of the fighting Forces and sabotaging the war effort; and they have never failed to use the Forces for strike breaking.

If this compulsory military training decision of the T.U.C. is as popular among the rank and file as the Essential Work Orders, forced labour laws and compulsory direction, Bevin, Citrine and Co. will have to use their steam roller tactics with which we have become accustomed if they are to maintain any illusion of democracy at the Blackpool conference in September.

We will venture to forecast an uneasy time for the Labour leaders in their attempt to force on this country a peace régime which is but a continuation of war conditions. There is discontent even to-day both among the Forces and the conscripted workers. The Services in the main have had enough, and now live for the day when they receive their "tickets". The complaints from the shackled people need no emphasis, particularly where the women, forced to carry on in heavy and unsuitable jobs while their natural inclination leads them to their homes and families, are concerned.

There could be several reasons why the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Labour Party Executive and the T.U.C. agreed last May, and the T.U.C. again last week, to the principle of military conscription:

Fear of revolution which would result in a society with workers' control and incidentally dispense with the Labour oligarchy which depends on the maintenance of a *status quo*;

Desire to follow a reactionary reformist foreign policy which would circumvent popular movements in liberated countries, and stabilise Stalinist communism;

As a partial cure for unemployment. (Two million young men in spick and span uniforms will look far better than two million young men lined up outside the Labour Exchanges or, as they are likely to become, the "Bureaux for the Transitional Redundants");

To build a corporate state evolving from the T.U.C., employers, military, and the government, which will reduce the people to control by corporatism;

Power mania. The megalomania of political power is a very real one. The parade of armies, grandiloquent pageants where the Labour leaders would be the object of acclamation, is not the least attraction of public life.

The T.U.C.'s "democratic revolution" which so excites the News Chronicle must be a great disillusionment for those colleague M.P.s who remember this speech of Bevin's in the House of Commons on 28/4/44:

"Holding the job I now hold . . . directing 24,000,000 people in a war of this character . . . we have taken under the umbrella of essential services now practically every operation in the country. Every boy and girl is embraced at this moment in the term essential services. That is because the nation is mobilised.

But there will come a time, and the civilian will insist upon it, when many of these

What has happened to Mr. Bevin and the Labour and T.U. leaders since then, that they should require a large conscript battle-trained army on their hands? Although they have agreed with the principle of military conscription for Britain, a development thought to be impossible before the war (and while Hitler and Mussolini were a power in Europe), no explanations have yet been forthcoming.

Conscription in peace time, which cuts across such a deep fundamental right of the people, will take a lot of explaining away, even to a propaganda-doped public. The argument of war expediency is wearing rather thin.

If the Labour bosses, as the national press suggests, should succeed in fettering youth to a military machine through compulsory training for five years, the struggle for human rights and individual liberty becomes clarified. It is the workers who will have to maintain such ominous luxuries as large armed forces and the equipment which will be necessary. They, by taxation and lowered standards of living, will pay the piper while Labour politicians and the T.U.C. call the tune.

On the other hand, the international armament manufacturers will have very excellent prospects for their business. Faced with national competition in men and arms, a period of boom for them is easy to forecast. And undoubtedly the military officer class will support the T.U.C. and Bevin. War is their wretched business, and whereas formerly they took a back seat between wars, and unless they participated in political careerism were virtually 'on the dole', now there is the probability that politics will come to them, and they will be assured a powerful future. The orders of the officer on the barrack square carry more weight with the rank and file than the platitudes of politicians.

All the rhetoric of Citrine, Bevin and Morrison will not alter the salient fact that continuation of conscription will be a challenge to human rights. Modern conscription is but a legalised and sophisticated method of doing the work the press gangs used to do in the past, when men were shanghai'd into the services. The T.U.C. and the Labour Party probably consider the old method a little indelicate, as they did the methods of Admiral Hawkins in slave-trading between West Africa and America. The technique may have been impolitic but the principle is apparently worthy of imitation.

Faced with the establishment in fact and law of this challenging and repugnant principle, those of us who will resist Bevin's legalised press gang will be placed in a similar position to the thief and the robber, and will be dealt with in the same way under the laws which will inevitably accompany conscription. But we believe that, as Dartmoor prison, with all the circumstances operating against the prisoners, could not prevent the revolt in 1934, so the Labour bosses, with far greater obstacles, will not be able effectively to imprison and shackle 44 million for long, or to eliminate the anarchists for one moment.

PRESTON CLEMENTS.

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## NOTICE.

### IN THE EVENT OF LEAVE BEING GRANTED

*Observance of the Local Laws.* Your men are permitted to go ashore and are treated as guests of the Soviet Union. If they will conduct themselves as such, there will be no unpleasant incidents. Listed below are a few points to bear in mind:

(a) Be prepared to show your ship's pass and identification documents whenever requested, especially at the gangways, without argument. The sentries have explicit orders to examine passes and have no authority to allow anyone to board ships without presenting pass.

(b) Observe the midnight curfew. Due to conditions of city and recent enemy occupation, sentries throughout the city SHOOT ON SIGHT persons seen wandering around the streets after curfew.

(c) Do not enter any private dwelling place without invitation. Overnight lodging in private dwellings is not permitted and offenders are liable to have a fine. Sleeping accommodation may be had at the Intourist, Ulitsa, for a limited number of persons. Ample restaurant accommodation with fair food is available at both Hotels.

In view of the above, for the present time, shore leave will be granted to armed guard and ship's crew members to expire aboard ship not later than twelve (24 hours) midnight. Officers who are able to procure sleeping accommodation so as not to violate curfew laws may be given overnight shore leave.

(d) Do not enter into arguments with Soviet Citizens on any subject and above all do not strike any Russian. The latter is a very serious offence, and, in the past, several foreigners have been sent to prison here for this offence.

(e) Under no circumstances should any food stuffs, clothing, cigarettes, tobacco, ship's equipment or any other articles be sold, bartered, or otherwise disposed of outside the ship or to Soviet citizens on board. This practice is forbidden by law and both parties are liable to punishment. Persons carrying parcels from the ship must be questioned and if necessary, searched as to the contents of the parcel: if he refuses his shore pass will be taken from him. The office cannot interfere with the Soviet endorsement of laws concerning entry or sale of contraband.

(f) It is wiser, from the viewpoint of health and other considerations, to refrain from intimate relations with local women. The enemy infected many of the women during the occupation of Odessa.

(g) Adhere to the No Smoking regulation in the docks and the port area.

(h) Vodka at best is a powerful drink and should be consumed with caution. Any which might possibly be bought outside of the hotel may not be vodka and may, as in the past, result in death.

## BOY WITH CLAUSTROPHOBIA DIRECTED TO THE MINES

During July a boy of 18, Denis Currier, was sentenced to one month's imprisonment at Feltham Police Court for failing to comply with the direction to undertake employment as a coal mining trainee.

Currier was directed to the mines under the Bevin Ballot Scheme, and went to South Wales for a time, but found the work impossible because he suffered from Claustrophobia, and accordingly absented himself. He was summoned for failing to comply with the direction, and at the court a statement from the president of the Medical Board was read out, which stated that there was no evidence of claustrophobia. Currier, however, insisted that he was given no more than an ordinary Army Medical Examination and that no tests were made for Claustrophobia. Apparently his Claustrophobic tendencies have been familiar to his friends and relatives for some years.

In sentencing him, the Chairman of the Court made the cynical statement, "If you go to prison you will be in a confined space and when the sentence is complete you will be brought up here again for not obeying an order."

This is only one of a number of recent cases which show that industrial conscription is not yet by any means finished, in spite of the false promises of the Ministry of Labour that it powers of direction would only be used in emergency.



# HIND DOCKS DISPUTE

by Our Industrial Correspondent

dren. When I met this docker he had just sold some clothing to provide food for his family, public relief having been refused.

The charge that the dockers were delaying the unloading of essential goods, such as food and building materials, is untrue, and is obviously a tactic used by the bosses and press to work up agitation against the men. The facts are that even before the dispute took place men were being stood off, particularly at the Royal group of docks. Here whole groups were idle for as long as two weeks at a time.

It should be remembered that all these men came under the Mobilisation of Labour orders. The bosses here had used the government directions and Essential Work Orders to screw down the workers as they had done in other places previously reported in *War Commentary*. The bosses used the stick placed into their hands with such effect that, in the dockers' own words, "ordinary visits to the lavatories were frowned upon".

The employers and authorities appear to be looking for trouble. They without doubt precipitated the present dispute. First, without consultation, they slashed wages; secondly, they refused to pay the 12s. a day attendance money, normally paid to dockers who are "standing by"; thirdly, they displayed incredible truculence in locking out the dockers and refusing to negotiate with them.

These are not methods calculated to sooth the breasts of the dockers. These workers are not political fools. Members of the Docks Progressive Committee told me they were aware that this was merely a continuation of the struggle that these men were carrying on for years before the war. Everywhere I found a lack of confidence in the T.U. leaders. The demand from the trade unions that the dockers must return to work on the bosses' conditions before negotiations will be started, is bitterly resented. Dick Barratt, general secretary of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union could not even find a seconder at a meeting of dockers on the 24th July for a proposal that the men should return to "normal" work. The efforts of the T. & G.W.U. have been as abortive.

The complete solidarity of the stevedores and dockers is much in evidence. Hundreds of these men have put up a struggle over ten weeks—a struggle not only against the bosses, but also against a combination of the Ministry of War Transport, the National Dock Labour Corporation, L.C.C., Port of London Authority, and T.U. officials. It is obvious that hunger and false public opinion are weapons used to break the determination of the dockers, but as yet there is little sign of a weakening of morale. One of the major weaknesses of the dockers was openly

*News Chronicle* of August 1st and 2nd respectively, that there was animosity between the dockers and soldiers, is nonsense. Both the men and their committee expressed to me their sympathy and understanding for the soldiers' circumstances. The soldiers were acting under orders. There would be serious consequences for them if they refused to obey those orders.

Some of these soldiers were far from happy. One group told me that this is not the first time they have been used for strike-breaking. In the case of these men the previous instance was at Plymouth. Obviously there was an attempt by the authorities to put up a ban on fraternisation. There were nearly as many police and red-caps outside the dock gates as there were dockers. This did not prevent the dockers from having a whip-round for cigarettes for the soldiers.

The dockers are persistently and pointedly asking who is behind the decision to use the troops. They could no longer blame the Tories, and they have few political illusions. Their long and grim struggle has given them a positive and intelligent perception of political and social conditions that militate against the workers.

Behind the slogan of the dockers "A decent day's pay for a decent day's work" lie all the issues that have been before the dockers for the last half century. The lessons of disputes such as this must be learned if an equitable society is to be achieved. It is imperative in that struggle for the workers to close their ranks and abolish the divisions amongst themselves. The agglomeration of trade unions and T.U. groups in evidence in this dispute is an obstacle to the solidarity that is essential in the common struggle. One union for one industry would co-ordinate and strengthen the workers' voice and claims, and cancel out the divisions and fundamental weaknesses that are obvious now.

A Strike Fund has been opened by the Docks Progressive Committee. The Treasurer is Harry Whitewood, 60, Hawstead Road, London S.E.6. Donations to this fund will be of great assistance to the dockers.

## OPEN THE CAMPS!

People are still suffering and dying in German concentration camps. The *News Chronicle* correspondent reveals that thousands of political prisoners who had been interned by the Nazis, of deportees who up to yesterday were called Hitler's slaves and whom General Eisenhower asked to revolt when they were

# MINORITY PARTIES IN THE ELECTIONS

There is a story about President Inonu of Turkey that although he and the late dictator, Kemal Ataturk, were both agnostics, when Ataturk died he had him buried according to Moslem rites. On someone asking him why he did this, he explained that one never knew and might as well make sure—even if there wasn't a God it hadn't done any harm . . . years later he signed a mutual non-aggression pact with Hitler, and when told that Hitler would never keep his word, he made the same excuse—one never knew and it couldn't do any harm . . . Many people seem to have reasoned on the same lines in voting Labour. They didn't believe but one never knew . . .

That, incidentally, was the line adopted by many of the minority socialist parties in urging people to vote Labour. It is a trifle hypocritical for Communists and Common-Wealthers to have used that line when they themselves were in other constituencies splitting the vote and making a direct present to the Tories of certain seats. An excuse made, however hypocritical, is that if Labour were in power people would see through the illusion, and not vote for them again. In other words, having urged them to vote Labour (which they did without reservations) they would then turn round and say "We told you they were no good," when they actually said just the reverse.

### Death Of The Liberals

It is a little amusing to note how the minority parties fared. The Liberals are at last dead. The ten Liberal M.P.s are the last remnant of the Liberal Party. The schemes of all the get-rich-quick-Wallingfords who wanted to use the dying Liberal Party as an easy avenue into Parliament failed. In future they will have to side into the main parties.

The Communist line of the Popular Front and its variations have died a sickly death. In 1936 to 1938 the Communists urged alliance with Liberals, etc. as the way to win the Election. The Left Book Club and its cohorts were most sceptical of the Labour Party method of isolation. Since the war and Russia's about-

turn, the Communists have supported the Tories. They wanted the Tory majority "reduced from its swollen proportions" and to have a Coalition with a Labour majority, and Churchill at its head. The scheme would be laughed at now. Their candidates were all defeated, with the exception of Gallacher who retains his seat and Piratin who enters the Parliamentary scene after defeating the Labour ex-M.P. at Mile End, a fact very largely occasioned by an incredibly opportunist exploitation of racialism. However, the two Communist members will not be alone—there are other crypto-Stalinists in the new House; Pritt with others included in the Labour ranks.

### Common Wealth Debacle

Common Wealth, as prophesied by ourselves and many others, died at the Election. Only a month or so ago it was boasting it could even win the Election; it solemnly warned the Labour Party not to take it for granted that the C.W. victories at bye-elections meant a swing to the Labour Party. The result is that Acland and Lawson lose their deposits; Loverseed who turned Labour is the only Labour M.P. defeated by a National candidate; all the other candidates are defeated; and Millington alone gets in—one is tempted to believe by accident, since the Labour Party, thinking they could never win a seat like Chelmsford, put up no opposing candidate. The meaning is quite plain. C.W. tried to "work the oracle". They kidded themselves they had a special message, encouraged by their successful bye-electoral appeals to the middle-class. It is plain as a pikestaff now that the people who wanted to vote Labour voted Common Wealth in the absence of a Labour candidate. Once the electoral truce finished, so did the middle-class opportunism of C.W. It is a mistake to look on things like this as something inevitable, and try to think out a logical explanation of a party based on the whims of a few rich men, as the Trotskyists did, who had C.W. all cut-and-dried with typical pedantry: "Common Wealth represents that section of the middle-class which in times of, etc."

### The I.L.P. Legend

The I.L.P. did rather badly in the Elections. They had once spoken of 150 candidates. They put up 5, the excuse being that Labour had broken the truce, therefore they supported Labour. That is all very well but what we are entitled to know is where the I.L.P. candidates' policies differed from the Labour Party's? The programmes put forward, except as regards the war, were identical, and there wasn't too much said about the war either. The result is the two "strangers" went down peaceably; but the three

are celebrating a Labour victory, anti-Fascists are suffering in prisoner-of-war camps. We reported in the last issue of *War Commentary* that more than two hundred Spanish anti-Fascists were interned in a camp at Kirkham in Lancashire. These men fought against Franco, had to take refuge in France, were



these men were carrying on for years before the war. Everywhere I found a lack of confidence in the T.U. leaders. The demand from the trade unions that the dockers must return to work on the bosses' conditions before negotiations will be started, is bitterly resented. Dick Barratt, general secretary of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union could not even find a seconder at a meeting of dockers on the 24th July for a proposal that the men should return to "normal" work. The efforts of the T. & G.W.U. have been as abortive.

The complete solidarity of the stevedores and dockers is much in evidence. Hundreds of these men have put up a struggle over ten weeks—a struggle not only against the bosses, but also against a combination of the Ministry of War Transport, the National Dock Labour Corporation, L.C.C., Port of London Authority, and T.U. officials. It is obvious that hunger and false public opinion are weapons used to break the determination of the dockers, but as yet there is little sign of a weakening of morale. One of the major weaknesses of the dockers was openly admitted. This is, the divisions created in the ranks of these workers through the conflicting trade unions. All the other essentials for solidarity are there, but with some men in one union and the rest in another, and within each union the workers divided and sub-divided into differing groups, a condition of confusion arises. The advantages which would accrue to these dockers if they had one union would be great. The solidarity which already exists in spirit would materialise in fact. None the less, the fight being put up by these dockers against such tremendous odds is magnificent.

Efforts to break the will of the dockers by bringing in soldiers proved to be of no avail. It only succeeded in a further withdrawal of labour. The suggestion made in the *Star* and

things . . . will have to go back to serve the civil community . . . They will not be vital, many of them, to the war effort, even if we are pursuing with vigour as we are determined to do, the war against Japan. The character of the thing changes at that moment."

(Hansard).

What has happened to Mr. Bevin and the Labour and T.U. leaders since then, that they should require a large conscript battle-trained army on their hands? Although they have agreed with the principle of military conscription for Britain, a development thought to be impossible before the war (and while Hitler and Mussolini were a power in Europe), no explanations have yet been forthcoming.

Conscription in peace time, which cuts across such a deep fundamental right of the people, will take a lot of explaining away, even to a propaganda-doped public. The argument of war expediency is wearing rather thin.

If the Labour bosses, as the national press suggests, should succeed in fettering youth to a military machine through compulsory training for five years, the struggle for human rights and individual liberty becomes clarified. It is the workers who will have to maintain such ominous luxuries as large armed forces and the equipment which will be necessary. They, by taxation and lowered standards of living, will pay the piper while Labour politicians and the T.U.C. call the tune.

On the other hand, the international argument

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There are still dozens of concentration camps in Germany. Three months after victory, the "liberators" have not succeeded in suppressing what they themselves call the most abject feature of the Hitler regime. The camp at Belsen has been solemnly burned and its Commander will soon appear before an Allied tribunal as a war criminal. But other camps continue and to-day the victims of the Nazis who survived the tortures and famine are still hungry, deprived of their freedom and unable to get in touch with their families.

★ ★ ★  
In this country too, at a time when people

rich-quick-Wallingtons who wanted to use the dying Liberal Party as an easy avenue into Parliament failed. In future they will have to sidle into the main parties.

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These men who for nearly ten years have been the victims of fascism are now the prisoners of British democracy. On the 27th June they went on hunger strike, but stopped when they received the assurance that their situation would be changed. On the 12th of July a member of the C.N.T., Augustin Soler, committed suicide by jumping from a window. After this tragic incident some of the Spaniards were moved to another camp, but this is not enough. These men must be freed. They are all anti-fascists. Of 219 prisoners, 119 belonged to the Socialist Trade Union, U.G.T., 82 to the C.N.T., and the rest to republican parties.

Their imprisonment is a scandal. Other Spanish refugees are allowed to move about and work freely. Why this different treatment for men who have suffered more than others from the Nazi tyranny? We demand their unconditional release.

## 'Welcome to Russia'

We reproduce below the copy of a notice which was handed to a Scottish seaman on the arrival of his ship at Odessa on the 7th of April this year. The picture of Russia painted by this seaman in conversation with our comrades in Glasgow was far from the happy land, grateful to the good father Stalin for its salvation, which the Russian and English communists would like us to see. He spoke of starving children begging for food and being forced away from the sides of the ship by soldiers using the butts of their rifles. He also said, to illustrate the growing discontent of the people of this Black Sea port, that a girl whom he met took a Soviet badge from his buttonhole, spat on it, and threw it away. In fact, the impression gained from the following instructions is that of a tyrannical government frightened by the discontent of a starving people.

(e) Under no circumstances should any food-stuffs, clothing, cigarettes, tobacco, ship's equipment or any other articles be sold, bartered, or otherwise disposed of outside the ship or to Soviet citizens on board. This practice is forbidden by law and both parties are liable to punishment. Persons carrying parcels from the ship must be questioned and if necessary, searched as to the contents of the parcel: if he refuses, his shore pass will be taken from him. This office cannot interfere with the Soviet endorsement of laws concerning entry or sale of contraband.

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## The End Of The Freaks

The other little offshoots that came up in the Election—Independents like Hipwell, whose Allied Ex-Service Association persuaded so many candidates into thinking it was a force to reckon with, and who lost his deposit at the very tail-end of the poll: the tiny Fascist groupings re-appearing; the odds and surprises like Democratic Party and Sportsmen's candidate and Protestant Action and Independent Pacifist and Welsh and Scottish Nationalist and the rest of the freak candidates, all withered away. It is true electoral results mean little, but to parties and individuals depending on electioneering, they mean everything.

This is an encouraging sign; because if the freak candidates and minority parties had polled well it would have shown that the workers were disgusted with party politics and were turning to other political



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On the other hand, the international armament manufacturers will have very excellent prospects for their business. Faced with national competition in men and arms, a period of boom for them is easy to forecast. And undoubtedly the military officer class will support the T.U.C. and Bevin. War is their wretched business, and whereas formerly they took a back seat between wars, and unless they participated in political careerism were virtually 'on the dole', now there is the probability that politics will come to them, and they will be assured a powerful future. The orders of the officer on the barrack square carry more weight with the rank and file than the platitudes of politicians.

All the rhetoric of Citrine, Bevin and Morrison will not alter the salient fact that continuation of conscription will be a challenge to human rights. Modern conscription is but a legalised and sophisticated method of doing the work the press gangs used to do in the past, when men were shanghai'd into the services. The T.U.C. and the Labour Party probably consider the old method a little indelicate, as they did the methods of Admiral Hawkins in slave-trading between West Africa and America. The technique may have been impolitic but the principle is apparently worthy of imitation.

Faced with the establishment in fact and law of this challenging and repugnant principle, those of us who will resist Bevin's legalised press gang will be placed in a similar position to the thief and the robber, and will be dealt with in the same way under the laws which will inevitably accompany conscription. But we believe that, as Dartmoor prison, with all the circumstances operating against the prisoners, could not prevent the revolt in 1934, so the Labour bosses, with far greater obstacles, will not be able effectively to imprison and shackle 44 million for long, or to eliminate the anarchists for one moment.

PRESTON CLEMENTS.

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## NOTICE.

### IN THE EVENT OF LEAVE BEING GRANTED

*Observance of the Local Laws.* Your men are permitted to go ashore and are treated as guests of the Soviet Union. If they will conduct themselves as such, there will be no unpleasant incidents. Listed below are a few points to bear in mind:

(a) Be prepared to show your ship's pass and identification documents whenever requested, especially at the gangways, without argument. The sentries have explicit orders to examine passes and have no authority to allow anyone to board ships without presenting pass.

(b) Observe the midnight curfew. Due to conditions of city and recent enemy occupation, sentries throughout the city SHOOT ON SIGHT persons seen wandering around the streets after curfew.

(c) Do not enter any private dwelling place without invitation. Overnight lodging in private dwellings is not permitted and offenders are liable to have a fine. Sleeping accommodation may be had at the Intourist, Ulitsa, for a limited number of persons. Ample restaurant accommodation with fair food is available at both Hotels.

In view of the above, for the present time, shore leave will be granted to armed guard and ship's crew members to expire aboard ship not later than twelve (24 hours) midnight. Officers who are able to procure sleeping accommodation so as not to violate curfew laws may be given overnight shore leave.

(d) Do not enter into arguments with Soviet Citizens on any subject and above all *do not strike any Russian.* The latter is a very serious offence, and, in the past, several foreigners have been sent to prison here for this offence.

(e) Under no circumstances should any food-stuffs, clothing, cigarettes, tobacco, ship's equipment or any other articles be sold, bartered, or otherwise disposed of outside the ship or to Soviet citizens on board. This practice is forbidden by law and both parties are liable to punishment. Persons carrying parcels from the ship must be questioned and if necessary, searched as to the contents of the parcel: if he refuses, his shore pass will be taken from him. This office cannot interfere with the Soviet endorsement of laws concerning entry or sale of contraband.

(f) It is wiser, from the viewpoint of health and other considerations, to refrain from intimate relations with local women. The enemy infected many of the women during the occupation of Odessa.

(g) Adhere to the No Smoking regulations in the docks and the port area.

(h) Vodka at best is a powerful drink and should be consumed with caution. Any which might possibly be bought outside of the hotels may not be vodka and may, as in the past, result in death.

## BOY WITH CLAUSTROPHOBIA DIRECTED TO THE MINES

During July a boy of 18, Denis Currier, was sentenced to one month's imprisonment at Feltham Police Court for failing to comply with a direction to undertake employment as a coal mining trainee.

Currier was directed to the mines under the Bevin Ballot Scheme, and went to South Wales for a time, but found the work impossible because he suffered from Claustrophobia, and accordingly absented himself. He was summoned for failing to comply with the direction, and at the court a statement from the president of a Medical Board was read out, which stated that there was no evidence of claustrophobia. Currier, however, insisted that he was given no more than an ordinary Army Medical Examination and that no tests were made for Claustrophobia. Apparently his Claustrophobic tendencies had been familiar to his friends and relatives for some years.

In sentencing him, the Chairman of the Court made the cynical statement, "If you go to prison you will be in a confined space and when the sentence is complete you will be brought up here again for not obeying an order."

This is only one of a number of recent cases which show that industrial conscription is not yet by any means finished, in spite of the fair promises of the Ministry of Labour that its powers of direction would only be used in emergency.

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This is an encouraging sign, because if the freak candidates and minority parties had polled well it would have shown that the workers were disgusted with party politics and were turning to other political means of action. They are not doing so. There are no immediate signs of new illusions. The Tory illusion has worn threadbare, the pathetic attempt of the Liberals to set up Beveridge as a little tin-god has burst open; and we do not think the Labour myth will survive for very long now that they no longer have the excuse that they never had the power. The workers can turn to new parties, politicians of another calibre, and go through more and more disillusion. We are not among those who look on a perpetual series of disillusion with equanimity. We hope the workers will turn to industrial, direct action, and get results; not wait fifty to a hundred years while they exhaust the variations of political ingenuity. The miserable submersion of the one S.P.G.B. candidate, after forty years adjacent S.P.G.B. propaganda for the working-class capturing the Parliamentary machine through political action, is symptomatic of the fact that however awake to the issues the working-class may be, they are not turning to competition with the charlatans on their own ground.

X. Y. Z.

## WAR COMMENTARY

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